

Historic Zion Lutheran Church

DIVINE SERVICE FOR THE FIRST SUNDAY AFTER CHRISTMAS

9:00 am Sunday, December 31, 2023

RECEIVING OF THE LORD'S SUPPER AT ZION

As intended by Christ and as practiced by the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church throughout her history, "Closed Communion" is observed in this congregation, in which the Lord's Supper is distributed only to those:

- (a) who have been baptized in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit;
- (b) who have been instructed in the truth of Holy Scripture as taught in the Lutheran Confessions, who have been confirmed in this Lutheran faith, and who now confess the same doctrines that are taught in this congregation, holding membership in a congregation of the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod;
- (c) who believe that in this sacrament the real body and blood of Christ are truly distributed to them and orally received by them, bestowing on them the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation;
- (d) who sincerely repent of all their sins, and desire to receive God's forgiveness in this holy meal.

Guests at our services, before receiving the sacrament, are requested to affirm these facts with one of our pastors. Thank you for honoring our practice. If you are looking for a church home, would like to be a member of Zion, or would like to learn more about the Christian Faith, please speak to one of our pastors about our membership classes.

✠ = *appropriate to make the baptismal sign of the cross*
When "rise" or "kneel" is indicated, it is appropriate to sit if needed

Greeting And Announcements: *The Lord be with you!* **And also with you!**

[Rise] **Invocation**

In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

The Office of Confession of Sins and Absolution

Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God, our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.

[Kneel]

Our help is in the name of the Lord Who made heaven and earth.
I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord. And You forgave the iniquity of my sin.

O almighty God, merciful Father, I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.

Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ, I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

The Congregation rises, turns towards the entrance of the nave, and faces the Cross of Christ, the reminder of Christ's promise to come and dwell among His people as they are gathered in His name.

Entrance Hymn Let Us All Burgundy Hymn 390

Kyrie




Lord, have mer - cy up - on us. Christ, have
mer - cy up - on us. Lord, have mer - cy up - on us.

Gloria Hymn Angels We Have Heard Burgundy Hymn 368

Salutation

The Lord be with you.



And with thy spir— it.

Collect for the First Sunday after Christmas: *O God, our Maker and Redeemer, You wonderfully created us and in the incarnation of Your Son yet more wondrously restored our human nature. Grant that we may ever be alive in Him who made Himself to be like us; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.*



A ——— men!

[*Be Seated*]

+ **The Office of the Word of God** +

Old Testament Reading..... Isaiah 61:10-62:3

[*After the reading*] *This is the word of the Lord.* Thanks be to God.

Epistle of the Day Galatians 4:4-7

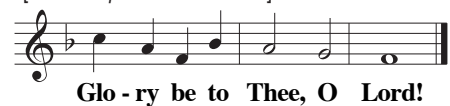
[*After the reading*] *This is the word of the Lord.* Thanks be to God.

[*Rise*] **Sequence Hymn** Let Our Gladness Burgundy Hymn 381

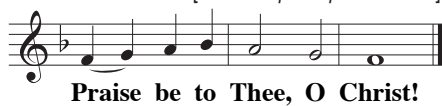
Holy Gospel St. Luke 2:22-40

[*The Gospel is announced.*]

[*The Gospel is proclaimed.*]



Glo - ry be to Thee, O Lord!



Praise be to Thee, O Christ!

Confession of Faith (The Nicene Creed)

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of Very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made; Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven

[*Bow*] And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, And was made man;

And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried; And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures; And ascended into heaven, And sits at the right hand of the Father; And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom will have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified, Who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe in one Holy Christian and Apostolic Church. I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins, And I look for the resurrection of the dead, And the life ✠ of the world to come. Amen!

[Be Seated]

Hymn of the Day Let All Together Praise Our God ... Burgundy Hymn 389

[All sing stanzas 1 & 2; Men alone sing stanzas 3 & 5;
Women alone sing stanzas 4 & 6; All sing stanza 7; Rise for stanza 7.]

Sermon

[Rise] Prayer of the Church

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus and for all people according to their needs: [After each petition]:..., Lord, in Your mercy: **Hear our prayer.**
[After the final prayer]:..., one God, now and forever **Amen.**

[Be Seated] Offerings, Voluntary

[Rise] Offertory Hymn Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God

Cre-ate in me a clean heart, O God, and re - new a right
spir-it with - in me. Cast me not a - way from Thy pres- ence, and
take not Thy Ho - ly Spir - it from me. Re-store un-to me the joy of
Thy sal-va - tion; and up - hold me with Thy free spir-it. A - men.

+ The Office of the Sacrament of the Altar +

Preface

The Lord be with you.

Lift up your hearts.

And with thy spir - it. We lift them up un-to the Lord.

Let us give thanks unto the Lord, our God.

It is meet and right so to do.

Proper Preface for Christmas, Sanctus

It is truly meet, right and salutary ever more praising You and saying:

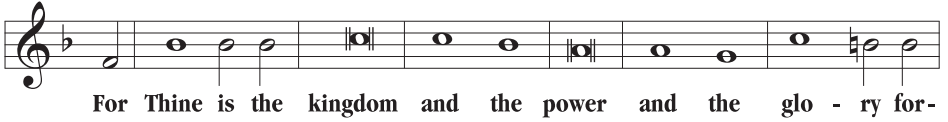
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord God of Sab - a - oth;
Heav'n and earth are full of Thy glo - ry; Ho - san-na Ho - san-na, Ho -
san - na in the high-est. Bless-ed is He, Bless-ed is He, Bless-ed is He that



com-eth in the name of the Lord. Ho-san-na, Ho - san-na, Ho-san-na in the highest.

[Kneel] **Lord's Prayer**

[Pastor chants:] *Our Father who art in heaven; but deliver us from evil.*



For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glo - ry for-



ev - er and ev - er. A - men.

Words of Institution, Pax Domini

The peace of the Lord be with you always!



A - men.

Agnus Dei



1-3. O Christ, Thou Lamb of God, that tak-est a-way the sin of the world,



have mer-cy up - on us. Grant us Thy Peace. A - - - men!

Distribution Hymns **Come Your Hearts** **Burgundy Hymn 375**
From East to West **Burgundy Hymn 385**

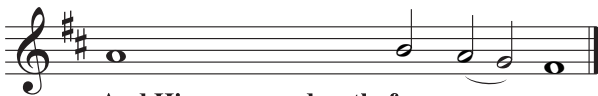
[Rise] **Eucharistic Benediction**

The Body and Blood of your Lord Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in body and soul to life everlasting! ✠ Depart in Peace! Amen!

Post-Communion Hymn **In Peace and Joy** **Burgundy Hymn 938**

Post Communion Rite

Oh, give thanks unto the Lord, for He is good.



And His mercy endureth for - ev - er.

Prayer of Thanksgiving ... now and forever.



A - men.

The Lord be with you.



Bless we the Lord.



Benediction

The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you. The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.



During the Recessional, the Congregation turns and faces the Processional Cross, the symbol of Christ's promise to remain with and lead His people as they now go and live in the world in His name.

Recessional Hymn O Sing of Christ Burgundy Hymn 362

Postlude

Readings for the First Sunday after Christmas

The Old Testament Reading is Isaiah 61:10–62:3

I will greatly rejoice in the LORD;
my soul shall exult in my God,
for he has clothed me with the garments of salvation;
he has covered me with the robe of righteousness,
as a bridegroom decks himself like a priest with a beautiful headdress,
and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels.
For as the earth brings forth its sprouts,
and as a garden causes what is sown in it to sprout up,
so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise
to sprout up before all the nations.
For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not be quiet,
until her righteousness goes forth as brightness,
and her salvation as a burning torch.
The nations shall see your righteousness,
and all the kings your glory,
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.
You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD,
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.

The Epistle is Galatians 4:4-7

When the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, "Abba! Father!" So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

The Gospel is Luke 2:22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the Law of Moses, [Mary and Joseph] brought [Jesus] up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every male who first opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord") and to offer a sacrifice according to what is said in the Law of the Lord, "a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons." Now there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout,

waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ. And he came in the Spirit into the temple, and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him according to the custom of the Law, he took him up in his arms and blessed God and said,

“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;
for my eyes have seen your salvation
that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.”

And his father and his mother marveled at what was said about him. And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”

And there was a prophetess, Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was advanced in years, having lived with her husband seven years from when she was a virgin, and then as a widow until she was eighty-four. She did not depart from the temple, worshiping with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour she began to give thanks to God and to speak of him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem.

And when they had performed everything according to the Law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own town of Nazareth. And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom. And the favor of God was upon him.

The First Sunday after Christmas



Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

2313 Hanna Street, Fort Wayne, IN 46803 | 260-744-1389
pastor@zionfw.org, church@zionfw.org | website: www.zionfw.org

Zion Lutheran Church is the body of Christ at Hanna and Creighton in Fort Wayne, Indiana that:

- Receives Christ's gifts in Word and Sacraments; and
- Responds to God's love in Christ by
 - Reaching out to those who do not know His love; and
 - Revealing His love in acts of kindness and mercy.

The Pastoral Ministry at Zion

Senior Pastor: Rev. Douglas D. Punke, MDiv (341-5397)
Field Workers: Paul Mroczenski, Matthew Harrison

The Teaching Staff at Lutheran South Unity

Principal: Amber Bahr (744-0459; www.lsusfw.org)
Teachers: Yvonne Schwantz (8th, ELA), Michael Cullen (7th, MS Science),
Chase Mertz (6th, MS Social Studies), Danielle Ramsey (5th), John Kuker (4th),
Abbey Zelt (3rd), John Fink (2nd), Hannah Maresh (1st),
Karen Koehlert (K-A), Rachel Wiegman (K-B), Natalie Reynolds (Art & Music),
Lizzy Hoham (Progress Partners Coach), Marcus Rush (K-5 PE)

The Support Staff

Organist and Director of Parish Music: Michael Hollman, MM
Church Office Manager: Melvia Culpher

PRAYERS FOR TODAY

- + For the church, especially those bearing the cross of persecution
- + For those who serve our Lord at home and abroad, especially our fieldworkers Paul Mroczenski and Matthew Harrison
- + For our nation; for our leaders; for our military, including James Hall; especially at this perilous time in our world
- + For our schools, especially Lutheran South Unity School, Concordia Lutheran High School, and Concordia Theological Seminary
- + For those who travel
- + For the aged and the homebound
- + For those who are on hospice care
- + For the ill, distressed, and those suffering affliction, including Jessica Krause, Connie Houser, Jason Kaiser, Janice Grim, Sarah Hollman, Debra Busche, Bill Weinrich, John Starks, Dwight Bieberich, Willodean Bates, Dick Hollman, Bob Ockree, David Evans, John A. Pless, Joe Harrison, Louisa Porter, Marlow Hogan, Gregory Hogan, Marissia White, Dwight Johnson, Sue Doepner, Blakely White, Joan Messmann, Ron Rastl, and Robert & Jenny Hobby
- + For God's blessing on all godly marriages
- + For the gift of life and for length of days
- + For the gift of rebirth by water and the Spirit
- + For those who mourn the death of loved ones
- + In remembrance of the faithful departed
- + For our communicants and for a fruitful use of the most Blessed Sacrament of our Lord's Body and Blood

IN THE SERVICE TODAY

Today is the Divine Service for the First Sunday after Christmas. Please see the dedication insert. Please also complete an attendance/communion card, including the names of all children, and indicate if you are communing. Non-members, please read the back of the card.

CALENDAR

December 31, 2023 thru January 6, 2024

SUN.	9:00 AM	Divine Service	Church
	10:30 AM	Education Hour	Various
MON.		Office Closed	Church
TUES.	12 NOON	Administrative Council	Conference Room
WED.	9:30 AM	Men of Zion	Conference
	5:30 PM	Wednesday Divine Service	Church
THURS.	7:00 PM	Elder Council	Conference Room
FRI.			
SAT.	11:00 AM	Private Confession	Church

January 7, 2024

SUN.	9:00 AM	Divine Service	Church
	10:30 AM	Education Hour	Various

ZION ANNOUNCEMENTS

EDUCATION HOUR Dr. Voelz will conduct Adult Bible Class in Bauer Hall. As needed, Sunday School will meet in the Assoc. Pastor's Office.

EVERYONE HIS WITNESS: Bearing witness to our Lord Jesus can be intimidating. "I don't feel qualified. The hearer may reject our witness; he or she may ask a question, and I won't know the answer to it." Etc. A stated goal for our Ministry Clarity plan is to provide an annual opportunity for providing resources and training for members to gain confidence in inviting neighbors to Zion. The elders investigated some resources and approved purchasing the Synod's "Everyone His Witness" program for use at Zion. The training, which consists of six one-hour sessions, will be held on successive Tuesday evenings at 7:00 p.m., beginning on January 9, 2024. The elders may invite you specifically, but if you would like to receive this training, call the church office. Seats are limited.

FLOWER CHART: Rosie has hung the flower chart; go ahead and mark the dates you want.

DON'T FORGET to get your email address and/or cell phone number to the church office, so that we are able to contact you with our new communication system associated with our church database. We plan to use it mainly for timely, need-to-know information.

FYI: annual giving statements will be ready on January 7th after church service. Any statements that haven't been picked up by January 21st will be mailed out on the Monday Jan. 22nd.

SAVE THE DATE: on January 28, 2024 after Divine Service, we will be holding our semi-annual Congregational Assembly in Bauer Hall.

NEXT YEAR'S OFFERING ENVELOPES are on table in the Great Hall. Most are gone, but if you haven't picked yours up yet, please stop and pick them up.

LAST CHANCE: Don't forget, if you would like to continue receiving the *Lutheran Witness*, please submit a check to Zion in the amount of \$19 by **today**.

MEMORY VERSE CHALLENGE: Isaiah 26:3—"You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts you." Last week's verse was Galatians 4:4-5.

LIFE DEFENDERS TRIP TO THE NATIONAL MARCH FOR LIFE: Colleged-aged and high school students are invited to join Right to Life of Northeast Indiana on a bus trip to the National March for Life in Washington, D.C. We leave the evening of January 17th and return home early morning on Saturday, January 20th. We want YOU on the bus with us for this life-changing experience! Learn more at www.ichooselife.org/dc or call our office at 260-471-1849.

RLNI: Our Rally for Life will take place January 27th at the University of St. Francis Performing Arts Center, 431 W Berry St, Fort Wayne, at 12 pm; doors open at 11:30 am. Our keynote speaker this year will be State Senator Liz Brown, a passionate advocate for life in the Indiana General Assembly! The March for Life will start after the Rally. Also, the **2024 Legislative Forum** will be February 17th. Doors open at 9:00a with the event running from 9:30a-11:30a at the Historic Woman's Club at 402 W Wayne St, Fort Wayne. There will be an all-new format. You will hear from legislators and organizations on where we stand on LIFE in Indiana. Breakfast is being served at a cost of \$5. Register for the Legislative Forum at ichooselife.org.

For the family of God's Priestly People at Zion

God calls His own people a "Royal Priesthood." God makes us kings and queens, princes and princesses who are bound together by the Holy Spirit in Baptism for the Christian benefit of each other. Priests **PRAY** -- They talk to God about their neighbor! Priests **TEACH** -- They talk to their neighbor about God! Priests **OFFER SACRIFICES** -- They offer to God the sacrifice of broken and contrite hearts; they offer their bodies and work as holy services to God for their neighbors. Join in this priestly work of prayer with your fellow members.

Morning Prayer

DAILY LECTIONARY

Evening Prayer

Luke 2:22-40	The First Sunday after Christmas	Isaiah 61:10-62:3
Luke 1:57-80	Monday	Isaiah 61:1-11
Luke 2:1-20	Tuesday	Isaiah 62:1-12
Luke 2:21-40	Wednesday	Isaiah 63:1-14
Luke 2:41-52	Thursday	Isaiah 63:15-65:7
Luke 3:1-20	Friday	Isaiah 65:8-5
Luke 3:21-38	Saturday	Isaiah 66:1-20

THE DAILY PETITIONS OF THE CHURCH

[Daily] **O Lord, have mercy upon us. O Christ, have mercy upon us. O Lord, have mercy upon us.** Let us pray:

[S] For the joy of the Resurrection among us; for true and godly worship throughout the world; for diligent preaching and hearing of God's Word of Law and Gospel; for our pastors; for the teachers and students of our Sunday School; for our Bible Class leaders and their students; for our catechumens; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen!**

[M] For workers; for the unemployed; for farmers; for seasonable weather; for businesses small and large; for our leaders, federal, state and local; for the economic welfare of the nations on earth; for peace in our world; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen!**

[T] For the tempted; for the addicted and despairing; for the tortured and oppressed; for the lonely; for the sick, the hospitalized, and the needy; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen!**

[W] For fathers, mothers, and families; for those adults who must rear their children alone; the teachers and students of Lutheran South Unity School and Concordia Lutheran High School; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen!**

[T] For the Church and her pastors; for the training of ministers of the Word; for missionaries of the Church; for the leaders of the Church, including Matthew, our synod president, and Richard, our district president; for those who have not heard the Gospel; for the fruitful use of the blessed Sacrament of the Lord's Body and Blood; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen!**

[F] For the preaching of the Cross; for those persecuted for the sake of Gospel; the confession of the orthodox Lutheran faith in our community; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen!**

[Sat] For faithfulness unto life's earthly end; for the revival of those who have withered in the faith or fallen away; for the dying; Lord, in Your mercy, **hear our prayer. Amen!**

[Daily] **The Our Father**

TO PREPARE FOR NEXT SUNDAY

The First Sunday after the Epiphany

Genesis 1:1-5

Romans 6:1-11

Mark 1:4-11



What Doctor Luther Says:

About the Great and Glorious Work of God

3. *His work is praise and magnificence.* This can be taken as an explanation of the great works of the Lord, namely, that they are great. And this, in the first place, with regard to the moral works, which we do out of Him and which He does in us. Thus it is called “the work of God” in John 6:28-29: “What shall we do that we may work the works of God?” And then follows, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent.”

Second, this can be understood as a reference to the twofold nature of Christ in this way: It is called “praise” when we confess Him to be God, and “magnificence” when we believe Him to be the exalted man. ...

Third, [this can be understood] that it is Christ’s humanity itself, which is “glory and beauty”; “glory” because it is made illustrious and revealed in many believers, but “beauty” with regard to itself with its gifts. For according to the humanity He is Himself the object of faith and the cause and source and head of our glory and beauty, for through Him, that is, through faith in Him, we are made illustrious and we become beautiful ...

Fourth, “glory” is the splendor of His glorious humanity, the first and noblest gift of body and soul, while “beauty” is the rest of the gifts and adornments. Thus through it there is the splendor of understanding and the beauty of love in us.

Fifth, the whole church can thus be called “glory” in spirit, because it glorifies Him, and “beauty,” because it adorns Him, as Is. 61:10 says: “You will be adorned with all these like a bride.” ...

[Sixth, The church is herself “praise and magnificence” before God, “glory and beauty,” but before the world a reproach of men and the outcast of the people (Ps. 22:6). And Is. 62:3: “You will be a crown of glory and a royal diadem in the hand of the Lord your God.” ...]

Luther’s Works, 11:374-7.

EVERY ONE HIS WITNESS

LUTHERAN EVANGELISM®



Learn how to naturally and genuinely share the Gospel with your friends and neighbors who have not heard the Good News. After this program, you will be more effective witnesses of Jesus in your everyday life!

LSUS NOTES

Praying for You!

Please pray for these students/staff:

Willow	Emeraude
Yanuell	Montray
Corlesiya	Sophia
NaTika	Ahrius
August	All LSUS families
Ny'Omee	this holiday season!



Christmas Program: This is My Son

We are so proud of the students' performance on Tuesday evening! Their weeks of hard work has really shown! A big shout out to Mrs. Reynolds for directing and putting the program together. Thank you to the teachers and staff that also helped get the students ready. Thanks to the music team, our host church (Zion Lutheran Church), and anyone who played a part in making sure everything went well. We've captured these great moments!



Kindergarten ROUND UP

Tuesday, February 6, 2024 @ 6 PM

This event is for parents interested in enrolling in their student in Kindergarten in the Fall of 2024. (They must be 5 years old by October 1st, 2024)

- Meet the teacher and principal.
- Hear what a day in kindergarten looks like.
- You will be learning about school expectations.
- Participate in a scavenger hunt!

Register with
QR Code



Encouragement Found in Scriptures:

And she [Mary] gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"

—Luke 2:7,13-14

LIFE NEWS—JANUARY 2024



**LUTHERANS
FOR LIFE**

lutheransforlife.org



Life Newsbytes

Pro-Life Pregnancy Centers Have Helped 1 Million More Women Since Roe Overturned

— On December 15, 2023, Charlotte Lozier Institute (CLI), the research arm of SBA Pro-Life America and America's premier scientific institute on life issues, released the findings of a robust survey of 2,750 pregnancy centers in the United States to calculate their extraordinary services, material support, and health care contributions to women and families across the country since the landmark Supreme Court Dobbs decision that took down *Roe v. Wade*. As preliminary CDC data suggests 32,000 more babies are born annually ... Key findings in the new report include: In 2022, pregnancy centers met with clients over 16 million times, both in person and virtually, with an estimated total service value of at least \$358 million annually. Pregnancy centers provided services to almost 975,000 new clients. Vital services provided at no cost: pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, parenting education programs, baby diapers, wipes, formula, outfits, and more. Of the over 16 million client sessions that took place, 97% self-reported a positive experience. These numbers speak to why 91% of Americans support pregnancy centers, according to a 2023 Knights of Columbus–Marist Poll. (*LifeNews.com*, 12/15/23)

Speaking up For Life

"When an abortion is performed, we proclaim that we know better than God. We disregard His wisdom, for He taught us that we should never kill innocent human beings. We proclaim that we do not want or need a gift from God. And in doing so, we seek to make ourselves more powerful than God. We seek to make ourselves God." *Archbishop Samuel Aquila*

"When someone struggles with the overwhelming guilt of a past sin, like abortion, repentance and reconciliation are the only source of relief. There is hope! 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9). Through all our days, the Lord never leaves us nor forsakes us. He is a patient God, waiting and wanting all to come to repentance and be saved." *Deaconess Pamela Buhler and Deaconess Chrissie Gillet, Word of Hope*

"Pre-born babies are patients who deserve the rights and protections applicable to children and adults." *Dr. William Lile, Pensacola, Florida*

lutheransforlife.org/resources/life-quotes



**ORDER LFL RESOURCES AT
WWW.CPH.ORG**

Just As ... I AM

by Pastor Michael Salemink

My little brother fell into a cactus as a child. The neighbors had a couple planted among the decorative stones behind their house. He was toddling on their deck next to the landscaping. Bent over to retrieve a toy and tumbled right off. Came up with two-inch spines sticking out of his arms and trunk. Started walking toward me like nothing happened.

Naturally I freaked. What kind of undead monster had he become?

Screamed and ran back next door to get a parent. Returned to find him crying, not from pain but because I had frightened him. Neither the drama nor the danger deterred Dad. Kid obviously needed a hug. Father scooped him up and held him close—prickles and all. (Then of course whisked him away to the emergency room. They extracted every barb-ended needle one by one and prescribed a precautionary antibiotic. Crisis averted.)

Sinful selfishness leaves humankind needing a hug. We clearly make quite a mess of ourselves. That includes all of us, no decisive difference from embryo or aged.

Still, it doesn't scare away our sanctity-of-life God. He hasn't forgotten becoming like us Himself. Thorns poked, straps pierced, nails punctured, spear impaled. Embracing such as you and me disfigured Him, but He wouldn't have it any other way. He's made Himself just like us to draw us near. In resurrection He remembers all the more His image imprinted within our kind.



"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:10).

Forgiving grace takes us as we are and calls us just. Just—righteous, holy, and honorable the way He is. Our Heavenly Father lends His identity and rights to every human being alive at all. Whatever age, appearance, or ability, I am as much as He is. I am because He is, and so are you, and so are they.

Just as ... I AM.



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