

GREETINGS FROM THE PASTOR:

*Blanket Sunday* is upon us. The Sanctuary will display the colors of our Comfort Givers' many splendid quilts sewn throughout the year, soon to get packed into boxes, loaded onto a truck, taken to Jerusalem Lutheran Church in Seville, and then transported around the globe through the ministry of Lutheran World Relief. It is quite an impressive Sunday, and an even more impressive ministry through which we are able to get quilts, blankets, school supplies and personal care kits to families who need these items all over the world. If you were wondering if there would be a way for you to contribute to this effort, the answer is a resounding and inviting YES! The Women of Zion would love to add more donated blankets to the boxes we pack in Luther Hall and then drive to Seville. Just bring them with you on Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup>.

The arrival of October also signals the big event of our *Tenth Annual Youth Missions Craft Show*, which is set for Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup>. The Sunday School classes are already getting their fabulous themed raffle baskets ready for show. Craft tables are being rented. Our youth are getting organized. All of this reminds us that it is time to buy and donate tickets for our world-famous German dinners! Zion's kitchen will be active preparing Pork Schnitzel and Bratwurst dinners for \$8.00 each. As usual, they are the greatest dinners on earth priced so low that I don't know how we make money selling them, but we do ... because of your support and generosity! Please make it a point to help our youth with the purchase of these delicious German dinners, which, as we well know, will be ready for take-out on the afternoon of Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup>.

The next big day on our calendar will be the Festival of *Reformation Sunday* on October 27<sup>th</sup>. With each passing year, we are getting closer to the 500<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the nailing of the 95 theses to the doors of Castle Church in Wittenberg, a turning point in the history of the church, and an even more significant turning point in the history of the world, which occurred on All Hallows Eve, otherwise known as Halloween, October 31<sup>st</sup>, 1517. Having just returned with Marilyn from a whirlwind trip to Wittenberg this past summer, and having seen the full exterior and entire interior of Castle Church covered with scaffolding, inside and out, as Wittenberg gets ready to celebrate *500 Years of Reformation*, it is very easy to get excited about the great Lutheran hymns we'll sing, the grace-centered message we'll hear, and the pride that arises when history gives birth to traditions that form the gift we call our Lutheran heritage.

This, then, sets the stage for what has become another tradition at Zion, the scheduling of our *Fall Congregational Meeting* on Wednesday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. This is the meeting where we vote on the 2014 Operating Budget. We begin with dinner at 6:15 p.m. in Memorial Hall, with our meeting to follow in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. The evening actually begins for our Sunday School families at 6:00 p.m. with our Annual Halloween Party; and the Congregational Meeting is usually extended by a few minutes so that we can have the drawing for our Raffle Baskets, announce the winners, and give away those incredible gift baskets. In any event, it is a great evening at Zion, with a lot of things happening that can all turn out to be great fun. Make sure to join us for Blanket Sunday on *October 6<sup>th</sup>*, for the Craft Show on *October 19<sup>th</sup>*, for Reformation Sunday on *October 27<sup>th</sup>*, and for our Congregational Meeting on *October 30<sup>th</sup>*.

In His service and yours,  
Pastor Mark Sherwindt

## CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

Mark Votaw called our September Meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Those in attendance were Juanita Cignetti, Dave Palumbo, Beth Shaheen, Carol Rossbach, Todd Elsass, Vicki Givler, Renee Keith, Cathy Harvey, Pastor Sherwindt. Our August Treasurer’s Report showed yet another monthly surplus, which is a perfect eight in a row for 2013. Our surplus for August was \$164.87. Our budget surplus for the year is \$2,927.65. Since September is a five-Sunday month, we have every reason to expect that we will extend our string of consecutive monthly surpluses to nine! We are so thankful for your generous support.

In addition to saying goodbye to summer, our September meeting looked ahead to the Congregational Meeting that deals with the 2014 Proposed Budget. All of our ministries are making their respective contributions to the process. The Finance Team will meet to formulate a proposed budget that Council will take up on October 8<sup>th</sup>, and then pass along to you for your approval at our Congregational Meeting on Wednesday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, which begins with dinner in Memorial Hall at 6:15 p.m., followed by our meeting in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m.

### **ZION'S FINANCIAL FACTS FOR AUGUST**

August Income	\$ 16,871.99
August Expenses	\$ 16,707.12
August Surplus	\$ 164.87
Income thru August	\$153,016.05
Expenses " August	\$150,088.40
2013 Surplus thru August	\$ 2,927.65
Food Pantry Fund	\$ 4,518.77
Zion’s Youth Fund	\$ 6,491.57

***We thank you for your generous support!***

## MORE COUNCIL NEWS

**Resource Ministry:** Every aspect of our financial performance has been exceptional in 2013. Our *Early Bird Giving* plan helped us get off to a strong start, which we have sustained with monthly surpluses throughout the year. Our various church funds that are not a part of the operating budget have also maintained strong balances: the Youth Fund has \$6,491.57 in it; the Food Pantry Fund, \$4,518.77; we still have \$2,254.42 in the HV/AC Fund; and even our various funds that are held at Merrill Lynch have enjoyed stability and strength, with balances related to our New Building, Reserve, Master Plan, and Memorials funds exceeding \$235,235.00. We certainly have our challenges in ministry cut out for us; but we continue balance budgets, grow our savings, and try as best we can to think boldly about our future. TBTG!

**Our Internship Committee** hosted two workshops in September, one to look more closely at the challenges we face with our youth & family ministries, and another to connect our plans for improving our approach to youth & family ministries with our desire to apply for an Intern for the 2014-15 academic year. We know that we can make the best use of an Intern if we already have a plan of action that is helping us to make progress in this area. As was the case with last year’s application, it is clear that between the Youth Fund, a Pastor’s Challenge, and an Intern Outreach Fund, we can fund all the expenses we’ll incur in 2014, and a good portion of the 2015 expenses, too. We had a very strong application this past year. Our setting, funding, and endorsements make us an attractive site for the seminary. While the number of seminarians looking for internship assignments is clearly down, we know that if we don’t apply our chances for getting an Intern would be reduced to zero.

## CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

We have set *Wednesday, October 30<sup>th</sup>*, as the date for our *Fall Congregational Meeting*. This is the meeting set aside to discuss and approve our Operating Budget for 2014. Part of the 2014 Operating Budget includes the proposal of our participating in the Internship Program during the 2014-15 academic year. An Intern's year of service would overlap into two budget years for us, with one-third in 2014 and two-thirds in 2015. We have estimated that the costs for an Intern would be \$11,000 in 2014, and then \$22,000 in 2015. In 2014 the Youth Fund will cover \$4,833 of the cost; our Internship Outreach Fund will cover \$3,340 of the cost; and the Pastor's Challenge will cover an additional \$2,827. That covers the total cost in 2014. We have a similar plan for 2015: \$4,000 from the Youth Fund; \$3,340 from the Internship Outreach Funds; with the rest coming from a Bicentennial Challenge, which we are just about ready to embrace. There's time, interest, and motivation to make this happen ... with your approval and support.

Many of these ideas were shared during our Sunday morning receptions and discussions in September. Some of these ideas will be incorporated into our presentation of the 2014 Proposed Budget. So, the agenda for our Congregational Meeting will involve at least two major motions. First, there will be a motion to approve our applying to participate in the Internship Program, with the 2014-15 academic year as our target date. Second, there will be a motion to approve the 2014 Operating Budget. As has become our tradition at Zion, we will meet for a delicious dinner in Memorial Hall at 6:15 p.m., with our Congregational Meeting to follow in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. That's Wednesday, October 30<sup>th</sup>. Please plan to join us.

## A BICENTENNIAL UPDATE

Since long before this time last year – beginning actually in April of 2012 – a Faceted Glass Task Force has been investigating replacing the colored glass on the east wall of our Sanctuary with faceted stained glass windows. It quickly became apparent that we had members who would be willing to help donate these windows as a bicentennial gift to ourselves in 2014. Our Task Force has been helped by various members, including Carol Rossbach, Nick Lanzalotta, Mary Jo Robbins, Brian Walters, Laura Thompson, and Pastor Sherwindt. We traveled to many churches to examine what faceted glass windows could do for our Sanctuary. We sketched designs, consulted with studios, and talked through possibilities. We've agreed to recommend that a local studio design, construct, and install five faceted glass windows, with designs that follow the seasons of the church year. There will be an Advent window, a Christmas/ Epiphany window, a Lenten window, an Easter window, and a Pentecost window. The window designs are unique to Zion, since our members sketched out preliminary representations. We look forward to discussing our recommendation with the Church Council, in the hope that Council will place our proposal on the agenda for our Congregational Meeting on October 30<sup>th</sup>.

Speaking about artwork that is unique to us, have you been able to enjoy the displays that Darlene Milavickas and Carol Rossbach have made to tell the story of our church buildings through the years? Their first display focused on our first church, with the keys to that log church and school on display in the Narthex. Their second display focuses on the second church the two Zions shared on Pittsburg Avenue. It's very interesting. Just step inside that Narthex and take a look. It's great!

## THE WOMEN OF ZION

The *Chancel Guild* will meet to work on polishing the silver and cleaning the Chancel on the evening of **Monday, October 7<sup>th</sup>, at 6:30 p.m.** We always have a great time cleaning, and what better way to spend Monday evening than to meet with friends to enjoy the gifts of delightful fellowship and delicious treats. You're welcome to join us.

*Zion's Comfort Givers* meet on the second and fourth Thursdays, which are the 10<sup>th</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> of October, at 9:30 a.m. in Luther Hall. There's lots of work to be done, but we enjoy more than our share of good conversation, along with some breaks that allow for coffee, cookies, cake, or some such thing. As the saying goes, many hands make work light. Yours are just the hands we're looking for. We can always use the help. So try to join us.

Our *Women's Monthly Bible Study* meets on the third Tuesday of every month. October's theme will focus on ***Deborah, a Determined Leader***. Deborah was a judge in Israel, who led God's people with power, determination, and a good dose of wisdom. Her story is found in Judges 4:1-24. What is told as an historical narrative in chapter 4 is sung as the Song of Deborah in chapter 5. Take the time to read both chapters. Then, be sure to join us on Tuesday, October 15<sup>th</sup>, at 9:30 a.m. in the Resource Center for some good fellowship and lively conversation.

The Comfort Givers extend their **THANKS** to everyone who helped us assemble all of our quilts, blankets, school kits and personal care kits. The amount of support required is quite humbling; and we want to make sure that those who do so much to help sense our gratitude for the good that they do. We can't name everybody by name; but you know who you are; and so do we. Thank you all very much.

## FOOD PANTRY NEWS

October is upon us, which means that Thanksgiving is near; and that means at least 93 turkeys with all the fixings for Thanksgiving dinner. But before we get ahead of ourselves, let's stay focused on the present for a moment. Cathy Harvey continues to do a great job in her double-duty role as Director of the Food Pantry and Caring Ministry Elder on Council. She has been reinforcing the need to stay aligned with the rules our sister helping agencies recommend as best practices. We have become increasingly attentive to paper work and postal zones. This becomes even more important as we anticipate that the needs for the assistance we provide is only going to grow both as we head toward the holidays and as federal budget negotiations keep cuts in things like food stamps in the news. These developments increase the number of families that need assistance.

We have also noticed that what used to be regular items on the shelves of the Akron Canton Regional Foodbank have been less reliably listed as available. Things like peanut butter and breakfast cereal were always available, but they haven't been lately. That's why we can use your help in donating these items. You don't need to donate the largest sizes; and if you can find these items on sale, let the Church Office know so that we can supplement our supply. We would also like to remind you that soup is a good item to donate – anything but tomato soup!

In getting back to Thanksgiving, if you would like to help, we'd welcome your purchasing a 12-pound turkey; or make a donation, and we will be glad to shop for you. We'll need to have your donations of frozen turkeys in our pantry freezer by the first of November, as that is when we will be ordering the rest of the turkeys that we will need.

## GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL



**HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:**

### UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- Sunday, October 6th:**        *Communion Is for Kids* Class begins during the 10:30 a.m. Service  
**Saturday, October 19th:**   Youth Missions Oktoberfest & Craft Show 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.  
**Wednesday, October 30:**   Zion's Annual Sunday School Halloween Party begins at 6:00 p.m.  
**Sunday, November 3rd:**    We honor All Saints' Sunday with our *Celebration of Certificates!*

### PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THE SIXTH GRADE

Our Sunday School year is off and running! The kids are starting out with a review of the books of the Bible and some activities to help them become more comfortable with reading the Bible. They will soon move into some great Bible stories as the year continues.

Sunday School begins each Sunday at 9:15 a.m., and ends at 10:15 a.m. We hope your children will join us! Thank you to this year's teachers who have dedicated their time and effort to our great kids:

Pre-K & Kindergarten:	Chrissy Parkomaki & Nicole Milek
1 <sup>st</sup> thru 4 <sup>th</sup> Grades:	Connie Riffle
5 <sup>th</sup> & 6 <sup>th</sup> Grades:	Janet Slease

### ZION'S ANNUAL YOUTH HALLOWEEN PARTY IS ON ... WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 30

We will be having the Youth Halloween Party during October's Congregational Meeting. That's Wednesday, October 30<sup>th</sup>, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. We are going to try to enjoy the outdoors this year for part of our party. We'll meet out in the pavilion for pizza and other delicious snacks for dinner, and then, if all goes well, we'll roast marshmallows and enjoy s'mores for dessert. There will be games, crafts, and other surprises followed by trick or treating at the end. **The children should wear their costumes (dressed for the weather). Bring a pumpkin to decorate and bring a flashlight, too.**



Sign up sheets for the party are located in the Church Office. Please sign up by Sunday, October 27<sup>th</sup>, so we can make sure to have enough food and supplies. Should anyone like to donate things like graham crackers, Hershey's small chocolate candy bars, marshmallows, candy, and small items for trick-or-treating, that would be great, and greatly appreciated, too. The children are welcome to invite a friend. We'll also need our older youth to help if they're available that evening. We look forward to seeing all the kids dressed up in great costumes. It should be an evening of GREAT FALL FUN. If the weather doesn't cooperate, then, of course, we will move the party inside, and still have a great time.

## MORE GREAT NEWS FOR ZION'S YOUTH

### **THANKS TO ALL FOR MAKING RALLY DAY A SUCCESS!**

A big thank you goes out to everyone who helped with Rally Day. The kids had a lot of fun, ate lots of good food, and won many, many carnival prizes in the morning. They also had a lot of fun outside during our *Great Grill Off*. We really appreciate everyone's willingness to pitch in and make the start of our Sunday School year a great success!

### **ZION'S TENTH ANNUAL YOUTH MISSIONS CRAFT SHOW & FALL "OKTOBERFEST"**

The Craft Show is fast approaching! Zion's Youth will once again have a table at this year's show. The kids will be making chocolates and other goodies to sell this year at our Bake Sale Table. If there is anyone who would like to bake some yummy treats for the Bake Sale Table, that would be great. There are sign-up sheets in Luther Hall. Please bring your items packaged and ready to sell. We look forward to the delicious items that Zion's Youth are making and all the delicious donated goodies.



The Sunday School classes are making awesome raffle baskets again this year. All classes will join in making the following baskets: the *Sweet Treats Basket*, the *Pink Ribbon Basket*, the *Sports & Ohio State Fan Basket*, the *Kids Fun & Rainy Day Basket*, and the *Family Fun Night Basket*. Each child is asked to donate items to help fill the baskets. They may choose any of the baskets to donate items, and will receive one raffle ticket for each item donated. All items are needed by Sunday, October 6<sup>th</sup>. Raffle Tickets for these baskets will go on sale Sunday, October 13<sup>th</sup>. The cost is 2 for \$1.00 and 15 for \$5.00.

The Youth Missions Craft Show helps raise money for our youth & family ministries, whether we're talking about fun parties, mission trips, even internship programs. The youth will once again be selling tickets for German take-out dinners for \$8.00 each. We will be selling tickets after both services and just before second service each Sunday before the craft show. The table will be located in the hallway by the Food Pantry. As always, we can sure use your support as Zion's Youth do their part in helping our church family embrace our mission.

***Hear Ye! Hear Ye!*** Youth will be needed to help on the day of the Craft Show. *That's Saturday, October 19<sup>th</sup>*. We will need the kids to staff the youth table, help the other crafters unload, help in the concession area and bake sale table, and any other odds and ends that come up. *We will also need help with set up on Friday, October 18<sup>th</sup>, from 6:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.* There are sign up sheets in Luther Hall for all those that can help! There are also sign up sheets for the congregation in Luther Hall for food items for concessions, bake sale items, set up, and help during the craft show. Your help and support is always greatly appreciated!

### **AN ACME COMMUNITY CASH-BACK RECEIPTS REMINDER**

We're back to collecting Acme Receipts to raise funds for our youth. We will receive cash back credit for receipts dated **September 21, 2013 through February 8, 2014**. Be sure your receipt has the "Community Cash Back" amount at the bottom. There is a collection jar in the Narthex.

## YOUTH IN THE SPOTLIGHT

*What is your favorite Halloween candy, and the favorite Halloween costume you have ever worn?*

## HOLY COMMUNION CLASS

Our premise is very simple. Since we offer Holy Communion to all the baptized, we must also offer opportunities to grow in our understanding of what God is doing through this gracious gift. That's what we are trying to do with our annual *Communion Is For Kids* class, which is offered during the second service each and every Sunday in October, beginning with Sunday, October 6. All of our kids who have not yet been confirmed are invited to attend. Understanding Holy Communion is not a once-and-done event. In fact, growing in our understanding God's grace is a life-long journey, for adults as well as our children. That's why we offer these classes; and that's what we want our children to learn as we join in this journey together.

"What are the classes like?" you ask. I think that Chuck Danner said it best with a story he told several years ago, and I've learned that I cannot improve on it: "We discuss the *Means of Grace* as the ways God shows His love to us through the Word and Sacraments. Part of this discussion raises the question of what we need to know to be ready to receive the body and blood. Our answer is *simply a believing heart*. This opens the door to discussing a believing heart as *a faithful heart, a loving heart, and a forgiving heart*, all while remembering that we have Jesus in our hearts to be with us." These classes are a great experience for our kids, the teachers, their helpers, and parents, too. There's always something to learn about the meaning of Holy Communion.

Here's how the class works. Our kids remain at worship through the children's sermon at the 10:30 a.m. service, when they join our teachers across the hallway in the Resource Center, until they rejoin us in the Sanctuary during Communion.



## THANK YOU'S & MORE

*Dear Men of Zion,*

The *Great Grill Off* on Rally Day was truly incredible! The generosity of our grillers – and their helpers, along with the many friends and members who helped prepare sides and salads, and let's not forget desserts, and Zion's own patisserie – is extraordinary! There are times when I just can't believe how delicious the food we serve is. Thank you to all for a great Rally Day; and thank you, Men of Zion – Mark Votaw, Randy Cizek, Dale Jacobs, Chris Thomas, Dan Wilson, Brian Milek, Tony Niesz, Steve Ross – for your culinary skills and heartfelt love for Zion.

*God's blessings,  
Pastor Sherwindt*

## REFORMATION NEWS

On the evening of **Reformation Sunday, October 27<sup>th</sup>**, the community of Trinity Lutheran Seminary will install their new President Rick Barger with a Eucharistic Service at Gloria Dei Worship Center that begins at 7:00 p.m. Presiding and preaching at this service will be the ELCA's newly installed Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton. The Celebrant at this Eucharistic Service will be the newly elected Southern Ohio Synod Bishop Suzanne Dillahunt. Should there be any interest in attending this Reformation celebration, please contact Pastor Sherwindt.

As many may know, Bishop Eaton will be installed at Rockefeller Chapel in Chicago on **Saturday, October 5<sup>th</sup>**, with a Eucharistic Service that begins at 2:00 p.m. Both the service and the reception that follows are open to the public. You can view the event live online by visiting the ELCA's website at [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org). The Northeastern Ohio Synod is planning a farewell reception for Bishop Eaton closer to home at Faith Lutheran Church in Fairlawn on **Sunday, October 20<sup>th</sup>**, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. Evening Prayer begins at 5:30 p.m. Should you have any interest in attending, please contact Pastor Sherwindt.

If you are still looking for one more event commemorating the Reformation, *Abiding Savior Lutheran Church* at 1845 S. Sawburg Road in Alliance is hosting the **28<sup>th</sup> Annual Reformation Celebration** organized by the Eastern Cluster of the Canton-Massillon Conference. The Rev. Dr. Walter Taylor, Jr., Professor of New Testament Studies and Director of Graduate Studies from Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus will be their Guest Preacher. The service begins at 7:00 p.m., includes the Eucharist, and concludes with a light reception. Child-care is provided. Everyone is invited. All are welcome.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF JUANITA MEIGHEN

December 31, 1926 – September 19, 2013

From the moment we began to plan this service, it has been clearly evident that your mother was the reason for the love of life and love for one another that makes this family strong. It is a unique gift you have, a precious gift, which draws you closer to God and one another as you mourn the loss of someone so dear, so loved, and now so sorely missed. Death has been stealing Juanita away for years, which doesn't make it less painful. In fact, it may make it more so because we have to live with the fabric of our lives being frayed and worn, ripped and torn, with a growing sense of helplessness, sadly mourning a sense of loss as we have our loved one right here, but not really.

Each one walks this difficult path alone. As a path leading to the end of earthly life, it is less and less uncommon, although sharing it with many others doesn't make it less difficult or less painful. It is our faith that helps us cope, and it is the faithfulness of the God we believe in that helps fill the void. God is with us. That's His name, announced with the birth narratives in Matthew. "His name shall be called *Immanuel*, which means *God is with us*." (Matthew 1:23) Then there's the promise at the end of Matthew, "*I am with you* always, along the way, at the end, and beyond." (Matt. 28:20) This helps because we know this God as personally involved, personally invested, and personally present in our lives, from our first step to our last breath. This is so crucial at times like these.

I very much enjoyed taking in the close-knit bonds that tie you together as family, the memories recalled, the love lived. While I am a stranger to much of that part of your lives, the Good News is that God isn't. God knows your loves and your lives more intimately that you do. He's the source of the love that makes your lives strong, and the source of the life that gives your love traction. And this God says NO – a clear and resounding NO – to the possibility that death will steal any away from the embrace of His love and His promise of true life. You know this, and Juanita knew this, too. Death will not have the last word here. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is God's last word, God's living word, the Word of God Incarnate now alive among us.

I thought I knew Juanita ... until I met with your family on Friday. I knew Juanita as a quiet, agreeable woman, always ready with a friendly if understated smile, signaling that everything was okay with her and hers. But now I find out that she was a fun-loving woman with a passion for dancing, loud laughter, and willingness to try anything new if it made time with family more meaningful and more memorable. Camping under the stars in tents, with campfires and all the rest, water skiing and boating, family get-togethers, hard work, doing your share, pulling your weight, taking the time and making the time to pass along what's important from one generation to the next: family ties, being there, having fun and affection that shows because it's lived. These are gifts that continue because they've grown strong through practice in real life.

Juanita's lasting effect will continue to be felt as you enjoy these gifts she valued, practiced, and lived, precious gifts of a life well lived with lots of love and laughter, and the promises God has offered with love given and more to come. There is no greater promise that can be ours than the words our Lord shares with us in John 10. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, who lays down his life for his sheep. God will not let death's claim stand, for Jesus or for us. Resurrection is God's victory. Paul tells us that Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father that we might walk in the newness of life. This is exactly what Jesus was saying in John, "I have come that you may have true life in all its abundance." Let that be the last Word: true life, eternal life, God's life, which is ours now and forever ... in Jesus' name. Amen

IN LOVING MEMORY OF DON HERTLER, SR.

May 9, 1928 – September 25, 2013

I am not going to use this time to focus on Don Hertler, Sr. as a great football coach, as an innovator of strategies and game plans, as a builder of character in young men on and off the field, or even as an institution for instilling values associated with football – like discipline, dedication, and determination – as ingredients that make life better. There will be plenty of time for these reflections as we make our way to Thanksgiving. Today I will focus on Don Hertler the man, or, more particularly, the man of faith, because the Don Hertler I knew was, plain and simply, a man of faith. I hadn't planted the seed. I didn't do the watering or the weeding. It wasn't mine to do the trimming or pruning. I just got to enjoy the fruit of others who labored to add value to the life of this man who added value to ours precisely because of the faith he valued, the life he lived, and the Lord he loved.

Don loved the God we worship. He was loyal to the Lord of the Church, and supportive of this church, its people and pastor. There was never a time, not even a single moment, when I could not sense the unwavering conviction of this man's faith, his unflinching trust in the God who made him His own by opening the gates and paving the way to the reality of true life now and the promise of eternal life in heaven. Don didn't see any reason to make faith complicated. And so, when I think of your Dad, that classic passage in Matthew 25 comes to mind, where Jesus decides to tell a parable about the Last Judgment. All ears were open. All eyes were focused on Jesus to see what the lead up will be. Imagine the pageantry, the majesty and glory, the tremendous suspense and special effects! But Jesus turns the tables, and low-balls the crowd to their surprise, and to the surprise of all who are judged on Judgment Day. It turns out to be pretty low key. "As you did it to one of the least of these, you did it to me."

They were shocked! Where were the great principles of jurisprudence that would define justice once and for all? Shouldn't the righteous have impressed the crowds with their great wisdom, with heroic feats of unparalleled bravery, or exceptionally outstanding never-been-done-before extraordinary achievements? No, faithfulness is defined in a way that makes it accessible to everyone who keeps their hearts focused on the Lord, their eyes open to the world, and their hands active in reaching out to folks who need us, offering help, hospitality, compassion, and support as a sign of our love for God and God's love for our neighbors. Your Dad knew this. He knew how important it was that we not forget the basics, that we not get so far ahead of ourselves that we leave the basics behind. That's true whether you're practicing with a football, or practicing your faith.

God's will is not complicated, but simple and straightforward. That's how your Dad understood it. He had simple rules, seemingly pretty ordinary and very graspable. Faith, family, and education: that was a pretty simple worldview. I know, because I grew up in that world. Seemingly ordinary, but when practiced, these simple principles can and will change your life. Faith in God was basic. It was the foundation. I'm not talking about complicated theological debates, or contemplating the imponderable. That wasn't your Dad's way. Faith had substance and consequence. Know what you believe; but don't just know it; live it. Faith doesn't come easy. You've got to think it through; but don't just think it; do it. That's what I like about Matthew 25. It's not about what we know, but what we do. It's not about what we think God wants, but what our world needs. Don't get so far ahead of yourself that you forget the basics. Love the Lord by serving your neighbor. It's all right there. Faith, family, friends, and community: connect the dots. Don Hertler, Sr. connected the dots, with attention to detail, in the right order, and practice, daily practice ... in Jesus' name. Amen