

Remember Your Creator While You're Enjoying His Creation

(Ecclesiastes 12:1—"Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth...")

Summer in the Black Hills of South Dakota is filled with wonder. Towering granite spires, pine-scented trails, shimmering lakes—whether you're hiking Custer State Park, catching a Rapid City Post 22 baseball game, or savoring ice cream in Hill City, one truth remains: this beauty is the work of your Creator, who meets you there in His grace.

Ecclesiastes 12:1 reminds us not only in youth, but in every season of life, to "remember your Creator." Summer is often treated as a break from everything—including spiritual routines. Church attendance drops, devotions falter, and God can quietly fade into the background of our vacations. But Scripture calls us not to forget, but to *remember*— especially when we're surrounded by His gifts.

Psalm 19 declares, "The heavens declare the glory of God." When you're hiking Needles Highway or watching the sun drop behind Black Elk Peak, you're not just witnessing nature—you're seeing creation proclaim its Creator. Martin Luther, in the Small Catechism, confessed this plainly:

"I believe that God has made me and all creatures... richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life."

The same God who formed the granite cliffs and pine forests also formed you—and redeemed you through His Son. Summer activities, especially things like baseball, may seem far removed from the church sanctuary. But they are not outside the reach of your baptismal calling. Lutheran theology calls this *vocation*—God at work through everyday roles. Whether pitching, coaching, cheering, or traveling, we serve others in Jesus' name. As Colossians 3:17 puts it:

"Whatever you do... do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus."

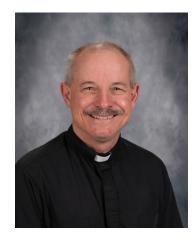
So yes, pray before the game. Thank God for safe travel, for teammates, for opponents. Show grace when the umpire makes a bad call. All of this reflects your Creator.

But don't forget: creation is broken, too. Forest fires burn. Bodies grow tired. Even vacations can disappoint. That's why we look not only to scenic trails, but to *Calvary's hill*, where Christ, the Creator in flesh, bore our sin and rose again. He redeems not only our souls but all of creation. Because of Him, every hike becomes a hymn of praise, every baseball game becomes stewardship, and every moment of rest becomes a glimpse of eternal peace.

This summer, take your Bible to the cabin. Pray around the campfire. Find an LCMS church wherever you travel. Let summer deepen—not distract—your walk with Christ.

Whether you're watching a game in Spearfish or biking the Mickelson Trail, remember your Creator—because He never forgets you!

Your fellow traveler, Pastor Schulte



MINISTRY FOCUS: Vacation Bible School

By Becki Aker

Vacation Bible School (VBS) is never dull! Over the past 13 years I have served as VBS Director, we have had the opportunity to turn a classroom into the belly of a whale, use eyeliner on our pastor, use every sheet and blanket I own to turn a classroom into an Israeli tent, and follow "Moses" through the Red Sea (complete with water spray), just to name a few examples!

VBS begins every day with a whole group opening, followed by 20-minute rotations through various stations. Children venture through "Imagination Station," which historically has involved arts and crafts, but this year is changing to science experiments! Another rotation has them traveling outside to "Fun and Games," which is active play based around our theme of the day. Students also attend "Bible Adventures" led by the pastors focusing on learning the Bible story of the day. At "Sticky Scripture," students learn about how the Bible Point of the day applies to



their lives and other kids just like them. "Music" involves singing and dancing to the always fun VBS soundtrack. Finally, we can't forget "Tasty Treats," because snack and recess are essential parts of any kid's day! We wrap it up all back together for closing time. Organized chaos is the name of the game!



We are blessed to have Lana Aker work her magic to transform our space into another world, be that Egypt, Under the Sea, Africa, Alaska or Outer Space! It makes it extra special for the kids and the grown-ups who come with them. Bible Adventures and Sticky Scripture are also decorated, so the whole building undergoes a mini-remodel this week!

Every day at VBS, we have the opportunity to share the love of Jesus with 150-180 students. What an amazing mission opportunity! According to our attendance statistics last year, *only 43% of the students who attend VBS are members of our congregation*. What a chance we have been given to touch the hearts of these children with the love of their Savior!

Vacation Bible School is a perfect example of the amazing things that can happen when we all work together. The congregation supports us with prayer, our wish tree, and financial donations. I so appreciate our youth volunteers, our adult helpers, the kitchen helpers and everyone in between. No matter your age or stage, I promise I can find a job for you! It's a wild and crazy week which leaves the adults feeling very tired, yet also filled with joy and a satisfaction that this just might be exactly what the Lord has called us to do!



Want to Join Our Zion Family?

We offer new member classes yearly in October. We welcome you to worship with us Saturdays at 5:30pm or Sundays at 8am or 10:45am. If you have any questions about joining our family or about Zion in general, please contact one of our pastors or the front office at info@zionrc.org.

Pastor Meadows: bryan.meadows@zionrc.org Pastor Schulte: garv.schulte@zionrc.org

DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS

By Azure Summers

Summertime schedules can threaten to take us away from our regular church engagement. But, here at Zion, we invite you to adventure and connect with your Zion family all summer long! Have you found YOUR 1 THING (or more) that engages you, builds relationships with your fellow Christians, and helps you know Jesus, grow in faith,



and serve in love? Bring your family and invite your friends to enjoy some (or all!) of these summer Zion activities that will help you do just that!

Vacation Bible School: Vacation Bible School will take place June 2-6, 9am-Noon. This year's theme is True North: Trusting Jesus in a Wild World. Participants and volunteers can register online using the link on our website or contact Becki Aker (605-430-7967).

Family Campout: Camp alongside other families from Zion for a time of fellowship and fun! June 6 (2pm) through June 8 (1pm), Sheridan Lake North Cove group campground DD1 "Deer". Come for some of the time or all of the time! No formal schedule or activities—just a fun time camping together. Everyone welcome. Contact Azure Summers (360-480-0023).

Hike & Picnic Fellowship: Bring your picnic lunch and join us for hiking and fellowship after late service on select Sundays beginning June 8. Meet in the narthex following service (about 11:15am). We generally hike about half-way, break to eat our picnic lunches, and then finish the hike. Hikes range from easy to moderate and are usually 1-3 miles. Contact Jon Epp (605-786-3172), Lynette Epp (605-605-786-3178), Jeff Summers (605-219-2860), or Azure Summers (360-480-0023).

Motorcycle Fellowship Rides: Kickstands up at 1:30pm on select Sundays through the summer. Meet in the Zion parking lot. Rides are usually about 3 hours and include a stop for refreshments. Contact Dennis Lively (605-484-2215) or Pastor Bryan Meadows (605-858-0015).

Softball: Come cheer for the Zion softball teams! The women's team plays on Monday evenings and the men's team on Tuesday evenings. Watch your bulletin for weekly game times. Go Zion!

Summer Bible Study: Join Pastor Schulte for "90 minutes in Galatians" on Thursday nights at 6pm beginning June 12. **Hills Alive Volunteering:** Our Zion team will once again be filling the merchandise tent with volunteers Saturday, July 19, 4–7 pm! Must be age 16+ (or 14 with parent). Other areas to serve are also available and volunteers are needed! Fill out your volunteer application at hillsalive.com and enter "Zion Lutheran Church" in the group/organization field. Contact Azure Summers (360-480-0023).

Adult Camping Retreat: Bible studies, crafting, hiking, and fellowship will be centered on a theme to grow faith and relationships. Tents and RVs allowed. This retreat is for those age 18+. July 25 (2pm) through July 27 (1pm), Sheridan Lake North Cove group campground DD1 "Deer". If you would like to participate in the planning of the retreat, please contact Azure Summers (360-480-0023).

Biker Breakfast during Sturgis Rally: The Zion Men's Ministry will be volunteering at the annual Blessed Emmanuel Lutheran Church Biker Breakfast in Sturgis. Made-to-order breakfast and dinner are served to the rally goers. The breakfast is planned for August 7 (subject to change) from 6:30am-Noon. Donations go toward their church ministry and a portion is available to District Churches in the form of grants. Meet great people from all over and offer prayers and fellowship. Contact Dennis Lively (605-484-2215).

Men's Ministry BBQ: A men's ministry retreat is planned for Friday, Sept 13 (6-9pm) and Saturday, Sept 14 (9am-1pm) at Hart Ranch. Creationism topics. Contact Dennis Lively (605-484-2215).

Mickelson Trail Bicycle Ride: Tentatively planned for Saturday, Sept. 20. Stay tuned!

The following digital pathways are available to help you stay engaged and connected as well!

Instant Church Directory: Join the online church directory! Step by step directions for setting up your account and accessing the directory can be found on the information table in the narthex. Interact with the directory by visiting members.InstantChurchDirectory.com, zionrc.org (select Church > Church Directory), or download the Instant Church Directory App. Contact Lynette Epp (605-605-786-3178) or Azure Summers (360-480-0023).

Raise Right: You'll feel great about purchasing gift cards through RaiseRight to help raise funds for Zion with very little time and effort! Information is available between services in the narthex. To utilize the app: 1. Download the RaiseRight App; 2. Use enrollment code: DF15279F3652, 3. Choose Zion Lutheran School/Rapid City, SD, 4. Use the search bar to find the businesses you shop at and purchase your gift cards! Select e-gift cards to use immediately or choose to have physical gift cards mailed. HINT The most convenient way to take advantage of this blessing is to buy an e-gift card as you're about to pay! Anytime, nearly anywhere! Groceries, gas, clothing, airline tickets—you name it! Imagine...you spend \$1,000 on groceries—Zion receives \$25! Easy!

Vanco Giving: Download the Vanco mobile app from your app store to set up a one-time donation or recurring payment. Search "Zion Lutheran Church Rapid City" then select Zion Lutheran Church.

Zion Website: Visit zionrc.org for a wealth of information about all things Zion.

SCHOOL FOCUS: Fifth Grade—Miss Weeks

Fifth Grade Classroom

By Grace Weeks

In fifth grade, we learn the basic subjects as well as Religion and Spanish. I do what I can to keep learning fun and engaging. In my classroom I do flexible seating. I have ball chairs, camping chairs and office wheelie chairs, to name a few of them. Research has found that when students get to choose their own spot, it helps them focus and concentrate more. It works well for my classroom community. Who likes March Madness? Well in my class, we do math projects based on the game scores of the college basketball games. I also do different activities I call "Madness challenges." We also fill out brackets for special prizes when the tournament is over! Fifth grade has also had the privilege to attend Memory Cafe. The Alzheimer's Association does this event once a month for people suffering from memory loss and their caregivers to come together for fellowship. Every year I have taken my class, and they have enjoyed it. At the end of the year our class has their end of the year trip to Outlaw Ranch where they learn outdoor education.

Get to Know Miss Weeks

By Patrick Fitzgerald

Grace Weeks is our 5th Grade teacher at Zion, and indeed she is a blessing in many ways. She recently finished her 6th year of teaching, and her entire teaching career thus far has been at Zion.

Grace was born and raised in Rapid City and attended Casper College and Montana State Billings. She played basketball for both schools. After college, she returned to Rapid City for her student teaching.

Grace said she wanted to be a teacher ever since she was a young girl.

"I feel God instilled that in me at a very young age," she said. "When I was at daycare I would play school with the other kids. More like they played school with me as I played the teacher."

Grace was just getting into the teaching groove her first year when COVID hit.

"Spending [the last two months] of my first-year teaching on Zoom was not fun, but I stuck it out," she said.

During her second year of teaching at Zion, one of her students got baptized and asked her to be there.

"That was truly an honor," she said.

Grace regularly invites local and state government officials to come to Zion and speak to her students. Mayor Salamun and then-Lt. Governor Larry Rhoden (before he became governor) are among those officials.

"It is fun to have special guests come in when we are learning about different positions held in office," she said.

For the past several years, Grace has hosted a summer basketball camp at Zion as a fundraiser for Zion's Capital Campaign. The turnout for her basketball camps is always impressive.

At camp, she teaches participants to "Play hard and give God the glory."

"That was my motto in college," she said. The third annual camp takes place at Zion this month.

In her free time, Grace says she enjoys hiking and being outside. She loves mini golf and bowling. She also likes to draw, and she is at work on a children's book that she hopes to publish soon.

Newly engaged, with a wedding planned for fall 2025, she has shared a few details about her upcoming wedding with her students of various wedding dresses. She even shared a photo of the wedding dress she chose.

"It's been fun to share these moments with them," she said.

"God has always been first in my life. He has helped me in more ways than I can say. I am blessed by what He continues to do in my life, and I am blessed he brought me to work at Zion," she said.

Amber Birkmire, who teaches 4th grade at Zion, agreed.

"When Grace first came to Zion, it was apparent within an hour of working together that it was part of God's plan," she said.

The two teachers bonded almost immediately over their mutual love of the TV show "Friends."

"Every day I see her striving to make her classes engaging and exciting for her students," Amber said. "I get to see the



love for her students shine through in everything she plans for them, such as projects and March Madness activities. I've seen how intentional she is when deciding reading and spelling groups; and most of all, I've seen how she truly makes Christ the center of everything. As a friend, I have appreciated our many, many laughs together and how she's pointed me back to God and His Word when I neglect to look to Him."

Faith is never far from Grace's mind.

"I have always had a heart for kids and teaching them and helping them grow in their faith," she said. I am so blessed that God gave me the heart for teaching because I couldn't imagine doing anything else."

Student Insights: Miss Weeks'

Final Thoughts

Nora: I'm going to South Middle School. Making friends was my favorite! I'm going to miss them so much! Miss Weeks and Ms. Kenyatta were my favorite teachers. Miss Weeks is fun, silly, creative, and so much more! Ms. Kenyatta would always give me a band aid when I got hurt in aftercare.

Jenson: When I went to fifth grade, I saw Miss Weeks; she was nice and helpful. I loved spending time with my friends and teacher. I am going to East Middle School.

Ben: I am going to RCC for middle school. My favorite memories were March Madness games and Outlaw Ranch. My favorite teacher was Miss Weeks. I am going to miss my friends that aren't going to RCC next year.

Aria Rose: My favorite part of Zion was the track meet and

Outlaw Ranch. Miss Weeks and Miss Birkmire were my favorite teachers. I am hoping to go to Saint Thomas More Middle School.

Weston: I am going to Rapid City Christian for middle school. Miss Weeks and Miss Birkmire were my favorite teachers. I liked science with Miss Birkmire.

Gabe: My favorite thing about Zion was my friends; some left and some joined late, but over all I will miss them most of all. My favorite teachers were Miss Weeks, Miss Birkmire, and Mrs. Graumann. I am going to East MS.

Lainey: I am going to RCC next year. My favorite memory is going to Outlaw Ranch with my class. I liked all of my teachers at Zion! I will be sad to lose some classmates that I have been with for a long time.

Brynley: My favorite teacher is Miss Weeks. I enjoyed walking the halls with teachers. Next year I'm going to RCC.

Aria Rice: I am going to RCC next year. My favorite memory was doing a spa in Miss Weeks' cabin at Outlaw Ranch. Miss Weeks was my favorite teacher because of all the fun stuff she does!

Bridger: I am going to RCC. I liked all my teachers. I enjoyed all activities at Zion and going on field trips.

Oakley: I'm hoping to go to Hill City Middle School. Miss Weeks was my favorite teacher because of ticket drawing and Outlaw Ranch. My favorite memory was going bowling in first and second grade. I had a great time at Zion!

Meribelle: Miss Weeks was my favorite teacher. I'm going to miss my friends. I will be going to RCC. My favorite memory was playing nine square at Outlaw Ranch.

Grace: Making friends throughout the years at Zion was my favorite part. Miss Weeks and Miss Birkmire were my favorite teachers. I am going to South West Middle School.

Eva: I am going to RCC. My favorite part of Zion was getting to know everyone. I also loved Outlaw Ranch.

Allie: I am going to Saint Thomas More next year. My favorite memories were Outlaw Ranch and March Madness. Miss Weeks was my favorite teacher because she is kind and helps anyone anytime.

Clara: I am going to RCC. I will miss Zion. Miss Weeks was my favorite teacher. My favorite memory was helping put together a surprise bridal shower for Miss Weeks!

Piper: Next year, I am going to RCC. My favorite teacher was Miss Weeks because she is my friend and she did so many fun things! I really liked playing Werewolf.

Audrey: My favorite teacher was Miss Birkmire. I loved singing songs, hearting stories, Hoosier day, and morning meeting leader. I love how our class always had fun together and connected. If there is a better school than Zion, I haven't heard of it!





NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: The Pourier Family

By Kate Meadows

When Zion Lutheran School was recommended by friends to Amber and Gavin Pourier as a place to send their two children, it didn't take a lot of convincing. They had wanted a Christian school for their two children—Josiah, 7, and

They scheduled a tour of Zion, and the further the tour went along, the more they loved the school.

"We knew before we got back out to the parking lot [that we wanted to send our kids here]," said Amber. "We turned right around and went back into the building and registered."

Decisions around Zion haven't been hard for the Pouriers, who joined Zion as members last fall.

Both Amber and Gavin grew up Catholic—he in Hot Springs and Rapid City and she in Rapid City where her mom lives and on the big island of Hawaii where her dad lives. The first time they worshiped at Zion, they were surprised at what a different worship experience it was compared to the Catholic worship they were used to.

"But [it's a] good different," Amber said.

Gavin attended Lutheran School in Hot Springs. During one of their first visits to Zion, he saw a familiar face—Zion music teacher and former 5th

grade teacher Carol Long, who was on of his teachers in Hot Springs years ago.

"It was really cool," Amber said. "It was like a full-circle moment for him."

Son Josiah just finished his 1st grade year at Zion. Daughter Britain finished Kindergarten.

Amber is a social worker at the VA and works with the homeless program. She has started doing some private practice work with homeless and at-risk youth in the community, as well.

"It's a special type of job to have," Amber said.

Gavin owns Extreme Foundation Repair.

The Pouriers say they are excited for Summer Daycare and a practical place to send their kids for the summer.

"We're super excited that we can be in a place that is so special," Amber said.

Stewardship Minute

By Kevin Aker

So, the story goes this way...

An old woman hurried to the pharmacy to pick up medication for her sick husband. When she got back to the car, she found her keys locked inside. The woman found an old rusty coat hanger on the ground. She looked at it and said, "I don't know how to use this." She bowed her head and asked God to send her some help. Within five minutes an old motorcycle pulled up, driven by a bearded man who was wearing an old biker skull rag. He got off his cycle and asked if he could help. She said, "Yes, my husband is sick. I've locked my keys in my car. I must get home. Please, can you use this hanger to unlock my car?" He said, "Sure." He walked over to the car, and in less than a minute the car was open. She hugged the man and through tears said, "Thank you, God, for sending me such a very nice man." The man heard her little prayer and replied, "Lady, I am not a nice man. I just got out of prison yesterday; I was in prison for car theft." The woman hugged the man again, sobbing, "Oh, thank you, God! You even sent me a professional!" (author unknown)

The Bible has story after story of God using the people you would least expect. Yet, when it is part of His plan, He will equip us with all the skills we need to be successful. Even on the days when you feel like the biker, God promises to give us spiritual gifts which we can use to help share the love of Jesus with the world. Start small. Find one new way you can serve others and at the same time, serve the Lord.



CONGREGATION MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Sharon Hilgemeier

By Peggy Hettick

Sharon and her family have called Rapid City home for the past 33 years. Originally from Kokomo, Indiana, Sharon moved with her family to Rapid City after her husband, Tom, completed 30 years of service in the US Air Force.

Sharon met Tom when he was stationed at Bunker Hill Air Force Base, now known as Grissom Air Reserve Base, just north of Kokomo. She was a waitress at a local restaurant at the time. Tom stopped in daily for lunch and before long, the waitress caught his eye. Tom and Sharon were married in June of 1964 at the base chapel at Bunker Hill.

Sharon was raised in the Baptist Church and although Tom didn't disapprove of Sharon remaining a Baptist, he made it clear before they were married that if they had children, the children would be raised as Lutherans. Not wanting to have their family split in their faith, Sharon took instructions to become a Lutheran prior to their wedding



After seven years at Bunker Hill Air Force Base and a year after Tom was sent to Thailand, the Hilgemeir family was transferred to California. They stayed there for seven years, before moving on to Germany for four years, and back to California for another seven years. Tom finished his Air Force career in England.

The Hilgemeiers chose to move to Rapid City after Tom was discharged from the Air Force. Tom was from Minnesota and wanted to be closer to home and family, but he also wanted to live close to a military base to receive military benefits. Rapid City, with Ellsworth Air Force base, became the place they called home.

Upon moving to Rapid City, the Hilgemeiers joined Zion. It wasn't a difficult decision, Sharon recalled. On their second visit to Zion, a woman named Mary Hennies introduced herself to them. When Mary heard that they were looking for a church home, she reportedly said, "Well, look no further! Zion is the place for you."

A few days later, Sharon received a phone call from a member of Zion, Jan Jungemann, who was on Zion's welcoming committee. Jan asked if the Hilgemeiers had any questions about Zion. Jan and Sharon talked for over an hour. After that phone call, Tom said something to the effect of, "I guess we'll be joining Zion, after two ladies who didn't even know each other just talked for over an hour."

Join Zion they did.

Throughout the years, the Hilgemeiers have volunteered countless hours to Zion. Tom served on the Board of Trustees and as a lay minister for many years. He also worked on the school computers. Under Pastor Duley, both he and Sharon worked tirelessly on the building committee and the capital campaign that raised money for building the church at its present location.

After Sharon retired from the engineering and science think tank, RESPEC, she spent the next 20 years helping to prepare Mission meals in Rapid City. She served on Zion's funeral committee for more than 15 years. She has helped organize multiple Pastor welcoming and going away gatherings and has served as head of finance. She has also long been a member of the LWML (Lutheran Women's Missionary League).

Tom passed away in September 2021 after a long battle with his health. But his memory at Zion will live on. Tom designed and built the church's altar, lectern, pulpit and Baptismal font, all of which are in use at Zion to this day.

Sharon said she and Tom never regretted becoming members at Zion. Their friends at Zion have helped them through some difficult times, as God calls church families to do.

"Zion is where we belong and we have been very happy here," she said.

At 84, Sharon continues to be active at Zion. She also enjoys spending time with her three sons, who all live in Rapid City, and her four grandchildren.

Random Question with...

Lindsay Reule, Administrative Assistant

What's your favorite place on earth? Why?

My favorite place is my hometown of Kranzburg, SD. It is a tiny little town east of Watertown made up of about 160 people. My grandpa grew up there and he raised his kids there and my dad raised us there. It is such a quiet little



My kids playing in Grandpa's yard.

place where kids can just be kids and run around town together playing "night games" in the summer or building tunnels in giant snow piles in the winter. You don't have to worry so much about strangers because half the town is related.

My dad lives in his parents' old home and my step dad lives in the home I grew up in. I love taking my kids back. The kids all just walk around town together and go to the old neighborhood school/park and play. I love that I don't have to worry when my kids are outside playing, because there isn't much traffic and everyone knows everyone.

One of the best times to go back is for the 4th of July! They have a huge parade and the town is PACKED! You can barely walk from one end of town to the next. Any other 4th of July is just not the same.

If I'm not in the office, there is a good chance this is where you'll find me!

Destination Imagination Update

The DI team, Simply Too Much, just got back from Global Finals Competition in Kansas City, and they did GREAT! They finished 9th in their division! They competed with teams from all over the world. We are so proud of them. Way to go team!





WICKS

Widows In Christ Know Salvation

Join us for a picnic!

When: Saturday, June 29

Time: 12:30pm

Where: Outdoor Campus

West

Bring your own picnic lunch and beverage.

There will be someone in

the parking lot to help guide you to the meeting area.

If you have any questions, please contact either Sylvia Stoltz (605-431-3595) or Priscilla Sayles (605-341-0505).

Dorcas Circle

Dorcas Circle sewing group will take a break for the summer. They will begin meeting again once school starts in the fall.