

Michael and All Angels: Pastoral thoughts for September 29th, 2022

Today is September 29, the commemoration of Michael the Archangel and all angels—the guardian angels, the messenger angels, the helping/healing angels, the rejoicing angels. Three archangels are mentioned in Scripture: Gabriel, familiar from the annunciation, Raphael, and Michael, who protects Israel, contended with the devil for the body of Moses, and defeats the devil in the Last Battle. This commemoration day reminds me of a children’s bedtime prayer I remember only in part: “Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, guard the bed that I lie on. Four corners has my bed; four angels round my head.” We may be beneficiaries of angelic ministries more often than we are aware. Thanks be to God for the angel hosts.

The children’s prayer is particularly comforting for me this week. We praise God for the child feared lost in Fiona’s terrible storm surge—did angels guard him there in the forest and lead him safely out? My own three daughters are also safe from the storm, and we are so thankful. Homeless and at the mercy of the wind happens in other ways too: thank you to all of you ministering angels who gave canned foods, tea-towels and pancake mix and gift cards throughout the summer for the “Purple Pantry” in the narthex. You supplied manna and quail for a grandmother raising grandchildren, a family struggling to feed the children, and people from the street. With cooler weather coming, needs become greater—consider taking a tea towel and bringing it back holding toothbrushes and toothpaste, home-made dried soup mix, soap and shampoo, underwear and socks for children, items the working poor might need. How blessed we are to know Jesus and to be able to do good for his poor children whenever we want.

St. Sergius was a man of seraphic vision too. Son of a once-rich 14th century Russian family, he was driven into poverty by civil war, avoiding learning and seeking solitude. He too ventured into the forest, establishing a prayer retreat that became Troitskaya Laura. He blessed animals; kept apart from possessions; lived simply, saw visions and performed miracles, many of them related to peacemaking among Russian princes. St. Sergius remains the principal centre of Russian spirituality today as we pray for peace in Russia and Ukraine. May the angels guard the children homeless because of the war. St. Sergius is commemorated by some Lutheran Churches on September 25th.

We are all God’s children; we all need the ministry of the angels; we all need to pray:

We give thanks to you, heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have protected us through the night from all harm and danger. We ask that you also protect us today from sin and evil, so that our life and actions may please you. Into your hands we commend ourselves: our bodies, our souls, and all that is ours. Let your holy angels be with us, that the wicked foe may have no power over us. Amen. (Adapted from Luther’s Morning Prayer, Evangelical Lutheran Worship, p. 305)

Holy Communion Back to the Altar Rail October 2, 2022

Church Council on September 21st voted to accept the Worship Committee recommendation that Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church Saskatoon return to our practice of communion at the altar rail, beginning with the service on Sunday, October 2, 2022 and subject to on-going review as COVID-19 circumstances change. We give thanks to God that our spacious altar area gives us this opportunity, and propose tables of ten communicants to allow physical distancing at the altar rail. For those who prefer to commune at the steps, we plan to distribute the consecrated elements at the top of the centre aisle following communion at the altar rail. After this, the elements will be brought to those who commune in the pew. Please call the Office, the Pastor, or any member of the Worship Committee to express concerns, make suggestions, or offer to assist as we evaluate this plan toward the end of October. Please pray for our communion practices, perhaps using this prayer from Evangelical Worship (p. 65): as a guide:

O God, our life, our strength, our food, we give you thanks for sustaining us with the body and blood of your Son Jesus Christ. By your Holy Spirit, enliven us to be his body in the world, that more and more we will give you praise and serve your earth and its many peoples, through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. Amen.

Council Applies for Wakati Wa Kafrika Center Mission and Ministry Grant

Council had a long agenda on September 21st! After much discussion about many details, touching on both concerns and opportunities, Council decided unanimously to apply to the Saskatchewan Synod Mission and Ministry Committee for a Social Outreach Grant to support the use of our facilities at Zion by Wakati Wa Kafrika Center. The grant will make possible to vision for outreach and service in the growing African community here in Saskatoon, providing coffee-and-conversation circles to end isolation and improve English speaking skills and orientation to Canadian culture; children's activities in the Fellowship Hall and the Ark Room, and private support conversations with Tigist related to immigration matters. In addition to facility adaptation costs, the grant includes request for funding for three staff persons: co-ordination, security, and janitorial. Initially the program will run about 15 hours a week, with the WWK Center Board looking at ways to fund and develop other programs such as driving practice and older youth after school activities, We hope to submit the grant application early next week, so this is a prayer priority! Pray that this project helps us live into our mission statement:

Moved by the love and grace of God, welcoming, worshipping, and working together in the name of Jesus Christ.

This prayer than might be helpful (adapted from Evangelical Lutheran Worship 75):
Draw your church together, O God, into one great company of disciples, together following our teacher Jesus Christ into every walk of life, together serving in Christ's mission to the world, and together witnessing to your love wherever you will send us; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen