

Zion Ev. Lutheran Church

Prairie Whispers Newsletter

July 2026
Volume 6, Issue 7



Really, again?

But you, brothers, do not grow weary of doing good. II Thessalonians 3:13

"Really, again?" Those words have crept into my mind on numerous occasions as a pastor, a father, and a husband.

"The Skiminski's have called and want to see you about counseling." – Really, again?

"Dad, we clogged the bathroom sink. Can you fix it?" – Really, again?

"Your wife has an emergency at work and you are going to have to get the kids, even though it was her turn." Really, again?

Now, I know for all who are reading this, they have their own set of "really, again." It can be from everything to blowing snow, to clearing brush, to balancing the books. But let's get to the real heart of the matter. What "really, again" is saying is that we are growing tired of doing good. We are growing tired of doing the right thing. We are growing tired of being a good person. We are growing tired of turning the other cheek. We are just plain growing tired.

And we have good reason. First, it does not seem that the good we do is being appreciated. It does not seem that the good we do is helping or changing anything. And finally, we wonder, "When, oh, when, is it going to be my time?" "When can I be selfish?" But Paul says, "But you brothers, do not grow weary of doing good."

It is important to note that Christ has called us to the crown of glory, but first we are called to the cross of suffering. This is important, first, for us. We are far too attached to the world. When we are called to take care of others and to serve Christ, it pulls us from our natural self-centeredness and on to Christ alone.

It is important to others! For we are the conduit through whom Christ works. Yes, Christ works in me, but also through me. As the old Pioneer prayer goes,

Jesus, help our eyes to see,
Our salvation earned by Thee.
Jesus, help our ears to hear,
Calls for help from far and near.

PASTOR PAUL MEITNER

PSMEITNER@GMAIL.COM

(612) 418-7130

LOUISE KIECKER

ZIONWINTHROP@GMAIL.COM

(507) 828-2756

ZION EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH

608 HIGHLAND DR. W

PO BOX C

WINTHROP MN 55396

(507) 647-5582

ZIONWINTHROP.COM

Thank You

Dear Zion Congregation,

Thank you for special and generous gift present to me on Sunday, June 7 acknowledging my years of playing at Zion. It was not expected, but humbling and so appreciated. It has been a blessing to serve in this way.

My prayer going forward, is that all of us use the gifts that God has given us to encourage each other and to further the spread of the gospel.

In Christ,
Vicki Kiecker

(If you would like to send Vicki greetings as she and Bruce are moving to New Ulm, their current address is good until the first week of July:

**Vicki Kiecker
23468 661st Ave
Gibbon MN 55335**

Shown below is the clock/photo of Zion's sanctuary and a remembrance plaque. This was presented to Vicki after the June 7 service at God's Treasures. She was also given a card from the congregation and a cash donation.



Jesus, help our feet to go,
In the way that Thou wilt show.
Jesus, help our hands to do,
All things loving, kind and true.
Jesus may we helpful be,
Growing every day like Thee.

But here is the key thing. We should not grow weary because what we are accomplishing is not going to be seen here on earth, but forever in heaven. Consider Christ! What visible glory did his ministry accomplish in this world? He died in shame as a criminal. And yet, for the joy set before him., he endured the shame and the glory for a time for a glory that outlasts and exceeds all things.

And that is why we can't grow weary. It is for the joy of what Christ is accomplishing through us, through our callings and vocations, that keeps us going. Therefore, with joy we schedule the counseling, unclog the sink, and pick up the kids. For it is Christ working through us to store up in heaven treasures that will never perish spoil or fade.

Amen.

God's Treasures installation

God's Treasures Childcare Learning Center's newest instructor, Paige Mathiowetz from Morgan, will be the three-year old's teacher this fall. Her installation will be Sunday, July 12 during the 9 am service.

Paige is engaged and getting married next summer. We welcome Paige to God's Treasures' ministry.

Vacation service times

In August, Pastor Steve Bauer of Immanuel, Gibbon is taking vacation, and our Pastor Meitner will be covering for him. On Labor Day, Pastor Bauer will be covering for Pastor Meitner.

On August 2 and 9 and Labor Day weekend, our service times will be at 9:30 am with no bible class prior. Immanuel will have an 8 am worship time those days. It was voted upon at the June council meeting that whenever pulpits are covered by Immanuel, Gibbon and vice versa, this will be the schedule.

Open Forum, Semi-Annual Meeting

The Open Forum for all members of Zion will be following the service on Sunday, July 19.

The Semi-Annual Voters Meeting will be held Wednesday, July 22 at 7 pm. All men, 18 and older, are eligible to be voting members. A sign-up for new voters will be at the meeting, along with a current book of the Constitution given to each new voter.

Only items on the agenda will be those that will be discussed at the July 16 Council meeting. No new items will be discussed or voted upon at the Semi-Annual Meeting.

God's Treasures May Report

May 7, 2026

We held our annual Grandparent's Day in April and, like last year, we had a great turnout. The grandparents were genuinely curious about what goes on in the classroom, and of course enjoyed spending a part of the morning with their little one. The event was held on a Tuesday in conjunction with our weekly chapel, so in addition to circle time and Bible time the grandparents also experienced a Biblical message that is applicable to their lives as well as the lives of their grandchildren. The children also sang two selections and played bells. Refreshments were provided by our dedicated team of volunteers.

Our final DEED grant projects are wrapping up ahead of the May 31 deadline. A new hot water heater and water softener were added within the past week. The water softener is a smaller unit that will be more efficient for the current as well as projected needs of our building. Acoustic panels have been installed in three rooms and still need installation in three more. Work will continue throughout the year until this project is completed. The work on the acoustic panels has been done with volunteer labor.

May tends to be a busy month and is looking to hold true for us at God's Treasures. We held an open house this week for the community to see our building. It was lightly attended, but still was very worth the effort. It was the first official open house we had since before opening at our current location.

PLS Sewer Project

The sewer at Prairie Lutheran School in Fairfax is original to the building.

A problem arose last school year where it was determined the sewer was not working properly and would need to be replaced.

This necessitates the removal of the main hallway in the classroom area. It is estimated that the cost would be between \$50,000 to \$60,000. St. John Lutheran is borrowing money from their trust fund accounts and are very willing accepting donations for this project to keep costs down.

Currently, the asbestos tiling was removed, and are now waiting for state inspectors to approve the project. If you wish to donate labor, please contact Joel Grunke at 507-276-2834.

If you would like to donate, several individuals have done \$5,000 matching grants, so any money given from Zion will be matched at this time by those funds.

Donations can be delivered to the Zion office or put in a separate envelop with "PLS Sewer Project" on the front and place it in the Offering Plate. If you have your name or a check in that envelop in the offering, you will be credited on your yearly statement for that donation.

eGiving

Go to zionwinthrop.com, look under Give and follow the links or text the dollar amount to 844-999-0914 or through the Vanco Mobile app on your cell phone.

Flowers for the Altar

Would you like to put flowers on the altar in 2026? If so, they would be appreciated.

Please talk to the people in charge for that month. Their names are on the flower chart, which is located on the wall across from the offices. The monthly information can also be found on the back of the monthly calendar.

Large Print Hymnals

Just a reminder that Zion does have Large Print Hymnals available for anyone wishing to see the service setting or hymns better.

If you need assistance with the books, please ask an usher. If you are unable to bring them back to the Ushers Table, just leave it in the pew.

Our preschool students will sing at church this coming Sunday as will our Sunday School for their final Sunday of the school year. It will be another opportunity for God's Treasures families to meet our congregational members and families. Refreshments and fellowship are planned for after the service. Extend a warm welcome to the new faces you may see. This event is an important part of our evangelism harvest strategy. It's an intentional effort to reach more souls with the saving power of the gospel.

The last major event we have planned is preschool graduation on May 21. We will have six graduates receiving their diploma this spring. Whenever there is a large gathering, food is usually a part of the celebration. We've extended an invite to all God's Treasures families to enjoy the graduation and celebrate the end of the school year with a outdoor picnic meal. If you'd like to volunteer for the two-hour event or make a salad or dessert, let me know and we'll be sure to fit you in.

Lastly, I cannot forget to mention that May also brings the celebration of our ascended Lord into heaven. We're told in Act 1 that "this same Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." May you always find comfort in this promise of His return.

Enrollment:

50 total enrolled (includes drop-ins)

37 PT/FT enrolled

15 prospects

Looking ahead:

Prep for our annual licensing visit which we anticipate to occur by June.

Solidify summer staffing

Complete final steps for Parent Aware rating

Blessings in Christ,
Adam Schmidt
God's Treasures Director

God's Treasures June Report

June 17, 2026

We received our last reimbursement payment from DEED in May, which utilized the full \$240,000 grant award. We met all eight objectives included in our application, the biggest of which was opening and staffing a second preschool room. A big thank you to Sue Hoffman and Liz Schmidt for processing 13 reimbursement requests and ensuring expenditures were allocated correctly in our financial reports.

Before our week-long closure, we had our annual licensor visit from the Department of Children, Youth & Families. There were approximately

six minor findings that require correction within 30 days of the visit. The staff did a great job showcasing our center. We received lots of compliments from the State about the overall quality of our program.

After a series of delays, our commercial prep kitchen passed the Minnesota Department of Health and local building code inspections. It will eventually give us more flexibility in our food offerings we serve to our students.

During MLC's spring call service, we were officially informed that graduate Paige Mathiowetz was assigned to serve at God's Treasures as our newest preschool teacher. She completed 95% of her orientation and had a few days of training with Morgan Ritter last week. She'll start her full-time call on June 29. A July 12 installation is planned at Zion.

Morgan Ritter and Clara Handy are ending their ministries at the end of June. We thank them for their time educating little minds and most importantly teaching the truths of God's Word daily. Right when we thought we had all of our classrooms covered, one assistant teacher will no longer be joining us. As a result, an alternative staffing plan is being developed to ensure coverage for all five classrooms throughout the summer. We are thankful that our prayers for additional substitutes are being answered.

We are already three weeks in to our summer school age program. We have an enrollment of 12 students ranging from 1st through 4th graders. Half of these students are new to us. We added some new activities and are hoping to incorporate field trips within the Trailblazer Transit service area.

Enrollment:

57 total enrolled (includes drop-ins)

44 PT/FT enrolled

13 prospects

Looking ahead:

Secure additional summer staff ideally who are assistant or lead teacher qualified.

Blessings in Christ,
Adam Schmidt
God's Treasures Director

June Council Meeting

Zion Ev. Lutheran Church Council Meeting June 18, 2026

Meeting was called to order by Ken Opitz.

Additions to Agenda

Secretary's Minutes: Motion to approve May 21, Meeting Minutes as written. Motion carried.

Pastor's Report: MLC may lose state licensing for graduates on all pro-

Lutheran Pioneers

July 3: Patriotic Pie Social, Gibbon City Park. Serving Pulled Pork Sandwiches, Root Beer Floats and Pie starting at 6 pm with the Gibbon Band doing a Patriotic Band Concert beginning at 7 pm. There will be children's crafts, kickball game and Patriotic Children's March! Come join the fun: Donations of pie are needed. Please contact Naomi Johnson at 507-276-0083 if you can help.

July 26-August 1: Girls' National Camp, Crivitz, WI

WELS Together

Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) has changed their format for the WELS Together newsletter that we used to insert into the bulletins about once a month. This kept us up to date with what was happening on the synod level.

With the new change, we are unable to have a format that is ready for printing. Therefore, you wish to see what synod is doing, please go to their website: wels.net.

Mowing the Lawn

Volunteers are needed for weekly lawn mowing at Zion. The church's lawn mower is available for use.

Contact Charlie Hoffman or Jim Janicke for questions, and how to access the shed where the lawnmower is stored.

There is a signup sheet on the table in the Narthex to sign up for a week at a time. It is estimated to take between one and one and a quarter hours to mow Zion's grass.



Become a Greeter

Said to be the most fun volunteer job, Zion is always looking for more people to become greeters at the services held.

Schedules are made up for a whole year, but we can fit you in if you are interested. Contact Louise at the office, and she will explain the very simple instructions and suggestions for greeters.

grams. Pray for MLC as they navigate this challenge. Membership Activity: Motion to accept Joseph Elbert, transfer from Immanuel Gibbon. Motion carried. Motion to accept Jake and Sophie Prunty by declaration of faith. Motion carried. Motion to transfer Felicity (Johnson) Trebesch to St. John's Sleepy Eye. Motion carried. These will be ratified at Semi-Annual Meeting.

Treasurer's Report: Approved subject to audit.

Board of Education: PLS: Had graduation. Kindergarten and Pre K will be taught by Mrs. Wenner. Still interviewing for an aide. PLS needs to replace main sewer pipe under hallway estimated to cost \$50 to \$60,000.

MVL: Large freshman class. Working on switching/upgrading electrical this summer. Updating water systems to remove iron. Ms. Sarah Allee called to teach compute apps

God's Treasurers: Paige Mathiowetz will be installed July 12. More kids in summer due to school age. Full-time aide was going to start and then backed out. Some other area teachers covering during summer. Still working on food service. Teachers are having to cover a lot of areas.

Board of Trustees: Looking for people to mow lawn. Water fountain in hallway is working. New AC unit is having problem communicating with thermostat, it should be resolved soon. Boiler project- said they will take care of it, they have had delays in getting to it. Sidewalk project- Joel Black planning for week of July 12. Water heater for sink in flower room - not planning to replace at this time.

New business: Open Forum July 19. Semi-Annual Meeting July 22. Summer Worship Times for pastor vacation days Proposing to set worship times when Pastor Bauer or Pastor Meitner cover for each other's vacation Sundays. Gibbon would always be at 8:00. Zion would always be at 9:30. Next Council Meeting will be July 16. Motion to adjourn. Motion carried.

Lindsey Johnson, Council Secretary

Food, Fire & Fellowship ending

The very popular Food, Fire & Fellowship potluck bible study, that takes place on the patio behind the Parsonage, is studying the longest Psalm in the Bible: Psalm 119.

The final class for this bible study will be July 7, the first Tuesday of that month, beginning with the potluck and fellowship with the bible study at 6 pm.

May Profit and Loss

Revenue

General Fund Income **\$36,039.10**

Expenditures

Building Upkeep:

Electricity	406.31
Heat	574.30
Insurance	1,518.80
Maint. & Repair	75.00
Umbrella Insurance	50.00
Total Building Upkeep	\$2,624.41

Christian Education:

MVLHS	1,275.00
Prairie Lutheran	13,250.00
Total Christian Education	\$14,525.00

Facilities Expenses:

Copier, Cmptr purch/Maint	652.60
Postage & Fees	212.00
Property Taxes	36.00
Telephone, Internet	76.08
Waste Disposal	65.20
Total Facilities Expense	\$1,041.88

For Our Worship:

Guest Organist	204.38
Offering Envelopes & Fees	34.20
Total For Our Worship	\$238.58

Missions

God's Treasures	500.00
CMO	1,667.00
Total Missons	\$2,167.00

Those Who Serve Us:

Janitorial fees	154.00
Organist fees	300.00
Secretary's wage	1,036.75
Conference Fees	220.00
Housing	1,346.15
Pastor Housing Equity	90.30
Pastor Health Insurance	3,094.00
Pastor Mileage	668.81
Pastor Salary with SECA Reim.	3,140.25
Payroll Expenses	59.00
Soc Sec./Medi Match Tax Expense	81.60
Workman's Comp.	122.79
Total Those Who Serve Us	\$10,311.85

Total General Expenses:

\$30,908.52

Net Operating Revenue

\$5,130.58

(Note: A cash basis is used for our accounting, meaning that this report only shows cash in and cash out. Please pray for Zion.)

Fellowship Hall Rental

To rent the Fellowship Hall and kitchen for family events, please contact Louise at the office for availability. It is on a first-come, first-serve basis, with church events, like funerals taking precedence.

Cost per day is \$35 for members, payable in advance and signing a form with the rules. Non-members must have council approval and have a different rate.

You Tube updates

In June, it was reported that the most watched video in May was Mother's Day on May 10.

We did five new uploads, gaining two new subscribers for 233 views and 2,772 minutes watched.

The 233 views were 30% less than April while the watch time of 47.4 hours was 19% less than the same times in April.

Thrivent Choice

Thrivent has changed their timing of the availability of Thrivent Choice Dollars.

All Thrivent Choice Dollars that you earn during the year are available immediately, instead by having to be earned throughout the year.

Monies given to the organization that you choose is given in a lump sum with absolutely no designation of who it came from. Consider your Choice Dollars to be an extra gift to the recipient.

To help out the PLS Sewer Project, consider using your Thrivent Choice Dollars to Prairie Lutheran School, Fairfax, MN.

Offering Counters needed

Volunteers to count the weekly offering are needed for July to December. The job has been simplified and training is available. Signups are on the table in the Narthex.

July Events

Schedule a visit with Pastor at home or an office visit. Call him at church or his cell 612-418-7130.

July 1-4-Pastor and family on vacation.

July 3- 6 pm Lutheran Pioneers serving Pulled Pork Sandwiches and Pie at Gibbon City Park prior to 7 pm Patriot Band Concert.

July 4- Our Nation's 250th Birthday!

July 7- 10:30 am God's Treasure (GT) Chapel

5 pm – Final Food, Fire & Fellowship Potluck Bible Study

July 9- 6:30 pm GT Board Meeting

July 12- 9 am Installation of Paige Mathiowetz during service
2 pm Winthrop Parade with line-up around parking lot

July 13-18- Pastor and Youth gone to International Youth Rally

July 16- 6 pm Elders meet

7 pm Council meets

July 19- 10 am Open Forum

July 21- 10:30 am GT Chapel

July 22- Treasure Haus Day in New Ulm -help needed!

7 pm Semi-Annual Voters Meeting

July 23- Noon Deadline for August Calendar and Newsletter

July 28- 10:30 am GT Chapel

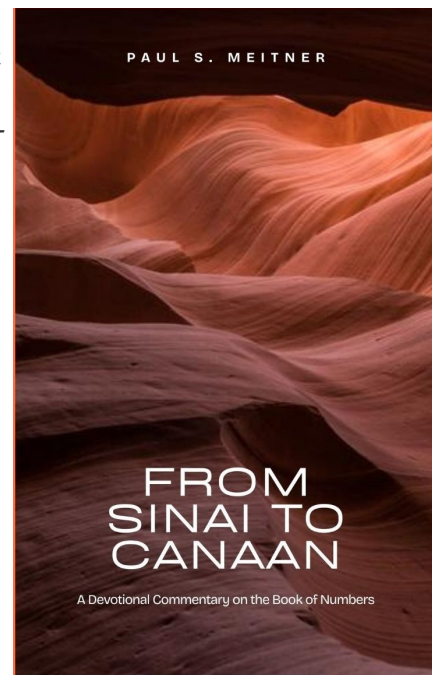
5-7 pm Food, Fire & Fellowship Potluck Bible Study

July 29-August 1- Sibley County Fair

Office hours during July and part of August will be at 1 pm on Mondays, Thursdays and Fridays.

Pastor's new book on Numbers

If you are interested in obtaining Pastor Meitner's newest book, *From Sinai to Canaan, A devotional Commentary on the Book of Numbers*, Pastor has a sign-up sheet on the credenza in the Narthex (next to the table where church announcements, sign-ups and monthly calendars are available). You can purchase a book for \$12.00.



Meditations

The Daily Devotional, *Meditations*, that is dated May 21 to August 29, 2026 is available on the Ushers Table in the Narthex. Both regular and large-print versions are available.

We learned that the books are around \$4.75 for the regular version and \$5.75 for the Large Print. If you would consider helping defray the cost, a \$5 bill in the offering plate would be appreciated.

New Members

In the June Council Meeting, new members Joseph Elbert transferred from Immanuel, Gibbon, while newlyweds Jake and Sophie Prunty were given membership by Profession of Faith.

We welcome our newest members and wish them the best.

Groaners

Why did the Bible break up with the dictionary?
It had better words.

Why did the choir bring a ladder?
To reach the high notes.

Why did Adam and Eve do math every day?
They were told to multiply.

What kind of man was Boaz before he married?
Ruth-less.

What is the best way to study the Bible?
Luke into it.

What kind of lights did Noah use on the ark?
Floodlights.

I told my pastor a joke. He told me it needed more prayer.

I tried walking on water. Turns out faith does not replace swimming lessons.

I prayed for patience. Still waiting.

The loudest sound in church is candy being unwrapped.

Prairie Lutheran School Help Wanted

PRESCHOOL & KINDERGARTEN CLASSROOM ASSISTANT

The Preschool and Kindergarten Classroom Assistant will assist and support the lead teacher in creating a Christ-centered safe, and nurturing environment for young children. Under the direction of the lead teacher, responsibilities include assisting with managing daily classroom operations, assisting with lesson plans, supervising children, managing classroom cleaning, assisting with personal care (feeding/toileting), and maintaining cleanliness. The classroom assistant will provide positive behavioral guidance, and foster spiritual, social, and academic growth in accordance with WELS ministry standards.

Key Responsibilities and Duties:

Christ-Centered Care: Model Christian faith, values, and behavior for children.

Classroom Support: Under the direction of the Lead Teacher, will assist the Lead Teacher in preparing materials, setting up activities, and organizing the learning environment. Two classrooms will be used much of the preschool class time. 1.) Preschool Classroom and 2.) Kindergarten classroom. When the lead teacher is conducting class in one room, the Classroom Assistant will be leading the other classroom as per the lead teacher's instructions.

Student Supervision: Monitor children to ensure their safety, health, and provide supervision of children during classroom activities, mealtimes, naptime, outdoor play and restrooms.

Instructional Assistance: Under the direction of the Lead Teacher implement lesson plans, lead small group activities, and support individual learning goals. Must be able to lead a classroom independently, under the direction and with the materials provided by the lead teacher.

Behavioral Support: Provide positive behavioral guidance and nurture independence in children.

Cleaning & Maintenance: Maintain a clean, organized, and safe classroom environment.

Child Care & Hygiene: Assist with toileting, handwashing, and feeding routines.

Communication: Maintain positive, professional communication with parents, staff, and lead teacher. Ability to work in a team environment.

Required and Preferred Qualifications and Skills:

Faith: Christian Faith.

Education: High school diploma or equivalent is required; coursework in early childhood education (ECE) is preferred.

Experience: Previous experience working with young children in a licensed childcare or school setting would be helpful.

HEAD COOK

Summary: Responsible for overseeing the kitchen operations and ensures the meals served to students adhere to nutritional standards and cater to diverse dietary needs and operation meets all county, state and federal regulations.

1. Head cook plays a crucial role in developing menus that meet governmental and institutional health guidelines while appealing to tastes and preferences of students.
2. Maintains a high standard of food safety and hygiene within the kitchen environment, including proper handling and storage of ingredients, stringent preparation practices and the upkeep of cleanliness throughout the cooking and serving processes.
3. Maintains all necessary monitoring reports (ie. freezer, refrigerator, temperature readings, illness log, along

with all daily required menu and serving records. And any other required reporting as directed by the County, State for Federal Government.) Maintains all education records per County, State and Federal Government requirements.

4. The head cook evaluates and adapts recipes to meet budget constraints while maintaining high quality standards.
5. State certification, or ability to obtain state certification within the first three months of being hired.
6. Attend regular and yearly training courses required by the Minnesota Department of Education in person or online.
7. Ensure proper storage of food items: refrigerated, frozen, cans, boxes, etc. Adhere to county, state and federal regulations.
8. Capable to do moderate to heavy lifting (40lbs.-60lbs).
9. Work hours 6:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. (varies based on need related to menu).
10. Will be compensated at an hourly rate of \$16.00 -\$22.00 /hr (based on experience) for 175 days, 6 hours per day.
11. Willing to follow Federal and State hot lunch guidelines.
12. Order food related to hot lunch program as needed based off of commodities, nutrition requirements, and state and federal requirements.
13. Administrator for the CLICS program (Minnesota School Nutrition Program (SNP)) Monitoring CLICS and ordering commodities as per the State of Minnesota & Federal Requirements. Gibbon Elementary Campus 1322 1st Avenue, Gibbon, MN 55334 Phone: (507)-834-6136 Fairfax Middle Campus 15 2nd Street NE / P.O. Box 130, Fairfax, MN 55332 Phone: (507)-426-7755 Prairie Lutheran Schools Website: www.prairielutheran.us Email Address: prairielutherschool@gmail.com
14. Paid Time off as per the Employee Handbook.
15. Able to work with children and faculty, effective communication.
16. Complete book work and record keeping per the state and federal guidelines.
17. Background check required.
18. Able to operate commercial kitchen equipment and maintain cleanliness of equipment and maintained per county, state and federal guidelines.

Both the Classroom Assistant and Head Cook applicants should fill out an application that is available on the table in the Narthex, scan and email prairielutherschool@gmail.com, mail the application to PO Box 130, Fairfax, MN 55332, or fax to 507-426-7755. Talk to Mr. Macord Johnson or any School Board Member for any questions.

Please attend the

Open Forum

(open to all members)

Sunday, July 19 following the service

and

Semi-Annual Meeting

(open to men 18 and older)

Wednesday, July 22 at 7 pm

Zion Ev. Lutheran Church
PO Box C
Winthrop MN 55396