

# LIFE AT THE SEM

December 2019

Ryan and Kari Maser

## PRAYER REQUESTS

- For Zion Lutheran, Pierce, and their continued ministry in 2020.
- For Kari, as she continues with her teaching and work at Christ Lutheran, Norfolk.
- Brothers and sisters in Christ here and around the world who are persecuted for their faith.
- For young men and women who are contemplating full-time church work.

## THE 'REAL DEAL'

Lately, I have been thinking about how distorted things may appear. I mean, we have all seen that advertisement on TV or online for a fast food sandwich, a new product, or gadget, and daydreamed about how it would positively impact our lives. What have you seen or heard of recently?

After a while reality sets in. When we actually go out and pick up the fast food sandwich, it is not what we had in mind. When we test out that product, it doesn't quite do the job it promised. Even that gadget might work for a little while, but then it wears out or becomes obsolete sooner than we anticipated.

In this season of gifts being purchased, exchanged, or returned, we may find ourselves being skeptical of the things we have, the people we interact with, or even the news that we see. We might even find ourselves asking, "is what I am seeing the 'real deal'? Am I setting myself up for disappointment yet again?"

Family and friends, this December has been an incredible month of witnessing some 'real deals.' Since our last newsletter, it has been a packed four weeks of teaching, worshipping, visiting, and learning for Kari and I. One of the 'real deals' was attending the Children's Christmas service at Zion on Dec. 15<sup>th</sup>, where over 100 children shared the Christmas story with over 500 in attendance. A similar 'real deal' watching Kari's preschool class share the Christmas story and songs

with their parents. We shared a 'real deal' with Zion's shut-ins and homebound, when we went Christmas caroling with a talented group of Zion singers. We praise God for the 'real deal' of our new nephew, Baylor, who arrived on Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>. One 'real deal' that we will never forget is attending the baptism of our niece, Lenora, and her mom (our sister-in-law), Chelsea, and having the privilege of being Lenora's godparents/sponsors.

But all of these 'real deals' point to the ultimate 'Real Deal' that we have celebrated this Advent and Christmas season. This 'real deal' is Jesus, the Son of God born in human flesh. While many in our world today say that Jesus was just one nice guy who lived and taught some good things or that Jesus never actually died on the cross, or didn't even live, we look to God's Word, where Jesus says this about himself: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6), and, "For the Son of man came to seek and to save the lost" (Luke 19:10). Jesus, which literally means "He saves," is the 'Real Deal,' the one who came for us, died for us, and rose again for us.

It is in Jesus that we have the promises of forgiveness, life, and salvation. It is our prayer that you would not only look for the 'real deals' in your life, but how Jesus' birth, life, death, and resurrection has transformed your life. That is what this Christmas season (Christmas isn't just one day, but 12!) is about: reflecting on what God-made-flesh means for you.

## GOD'S BLESSINGS IN THE NEW YEAR!

Thank you all for your prayers and support this past year, and for reaching out this Christmas season. We have been beyond blessed in 2019 by God leading us to Pierce for vicarage, allowing Kari to continue with her teaching, and in serving His kingdom. We pray that you all had a wonderful and safe Christmas, and that your 2020 would be centered on God's love and grace in Jesus Christ!

God's blessings,

Ryan and Kari