Katie Schuermann continues to delight readers with her latest book, *The Harvest Raise*. Her addition of characters with disabilities is done with dignity, respect, and humor! Katie carefully depicts the natural process many experience as they move from cautious welcome to acceptance, belonging, and mutual ministry. Would that more congregations follow this example and embrace people of all abilities, the gifts they bring, and the value they add to the Body of Christ!

—Mona Fuerstenau, Director of Lutheran Ministry Partnerships, Bethesda Lutheran Communities Past chair, LCMS Disability Task Force

Katie Schuermann’s playful humor draws the reader into *The Harvest Raise* from its first page, and her insights make you want to continue reading to the end. The bare flaws in her characters reveal our own failings; yet her story wraps us with such forgiveness, we feel an ever-warming forbearance toward those around us. *The Harvest Raise* is an especially well-written, thoughtful conclusion to the rare series that lightens my heart, makes my daughter giggle, and touches us both deeply.

—Cheryl Swope, MEd, author of *Simply Classical: A Beautiful Education for Any Child*, coauthor of *Eternal Treasures: Teaching Your Child at Home*, and creator of the Simply Classical Curriculum for Special Needs

Katie Schuermann’s latest book, *The Harvest Raise*, is another winner. You’ve heard of “comfort food.” Katie’s books read like “comfort books.” The pages slip by like silk as we read again about the lives in Bradbury. These characters come to life as we cry and cheer with their struggles and successes, smiling as it brings to memory some loved ones we know in our own lives.

Not only do we see their struggles with some of today’s moral dilemmas but we read solid theological foundations from the Bible in words that we can take into our day-to-day meetings with similar issues.

Thanks, Katie, for giving us some of life’s lessons through such a wonderfully imperfect place like Bradbury, for showing us God’s love and forgiveness through His servants, and creating the characters so near to our own lives in all of the books in Anthems of Zion.

—Shelley Moeller
LWML Vice President of Gospel Outreach 2013–17
Schuermann is at her best, crafting a narrative that is joyful and heartbreaking, hilarious and touching. This book serves as a reminder for us all—Christ is constantly at work in our lives; often in ways we least expect. While the story is fiction, the message is real. Zion is every church and her struggles are ones that we all encounter. Throughout the pages of The Harvest Raise, Schuermann’s characters bring us face-to-face with ourselves; reminding us that our triumphs, our sins, and our best efforts are all covered by a merciful Jesus. This is pleasure reading with a purpose!

—Matthew Machemer
Associate Kantor, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, IN
Choir director, St. Paul’s Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, IN

If you’ve read the first two books in CPH’s Anthems of Zion series, you already know that Katie Schuermann has a way with words, one that paints the people of Bradbury so vividly that they seem more like movie than book characters. The same is true of The Harvest Raise, as all our beloved Bradburians are back—singing, praying, laughing, crying, and yes, sometimes yelling their way through the trilogy’s final installment. The love that Mrs. Schuermann feels for her characters is folded into every word she writes about them, and her invitation to share in that love is one no good Lutheran reader can refuse. Yet the author neither sugarcoats nor offers pat answers to life’s most vexing questions, acknowledging throughout her story that sin is real and the devil always lurking. The Harvest Raise contains both joy and sorrow in abundance, along with a quiet and ever-present assurance of Gospel hope and comfort. Upon reading the final page, you will feel as though you have come full circle from your first encounter with Mrs. Scheinberg in House of Living Stones. Don’t be surprised when the tears flow! Thanks be to God for Zion in Bradbury, and for each of our Zions—past, present, and future. “O grant that each of us, Now met before Thee here, May meet together thus When Thou and Thine appear” (LSB 921).

—Cheryl Magness
Blogger at roundunvarnishedtale.blogspot.com
The Harvest Raise brings Katie Schuermann’s trilogy about life in Bradbury, Illinois, to an end—too soon! Katie has a real affection for her characters. Before Bradbury slips away, she guides us to an understanding that “family” reaches far beyond bloodlines, and there is freedom in forgiving others and having a sense of humor about oneself. Where is Katie in all these characters and situations? She is, of course, in every poignant, forgiving, insightful, hilarious word.

—Ardis Larvick
German/English Instructor (ret.)
Stewardson-Strasburg High School

Unlike other Christian books that focus on the Law and what you must do, this trilogy has been blissful and abounding in grace. Katie Schuermann has once again made such wonderfully relatable characters as she focuses on a pastor’s life and his struggle to balance family and church. I have lived through some of the things Emily has faced. That absolute truth and honesty Katie brings to the reader is refreshing. Living the life of a pastor’s wife is hard. I just want to hold Emily tight as she shoulders such pain with determination and strength. The hardships, struggles, and yet so many blessings make this book something to reach for when there is a want to hear pure Gospel and still get lost in a beautifully rich, complex storyline. I never thought the second book could be topped, sucking me into such human emotions attached to everyday life. And yet Katie has succeeded in making something that balances growth and loss at the same time while leading you into a greater, more in-depth devotional life.

—Allison Hull
Pastor’s wife and keeper of a rambunctious household

This book is a must-read for all professional church workers, students, and spouses! Katie blows apart the myth of the “perfect church” and the “perfect Christian” by deftly applying Law and Gospel and a generous dose of humor to the dilemmas generated by her well-developed characters as she exposes their sins against God and society. Throughout the book, she demonstrates God’s unconditional love, forgiveness, and power to use cracked, flawed vessels, people of all abilities, as instruments of grace and healing in a broken world.

—Brenda Scarbeary
Deaconess, Bethesda Ministry Consultant, and pastor’s wife
Other Books by Katie Schuermann

*He Remembers the Barren*

*Pew Sisters*

*Anthems of Zion Series*

*House of Living Stones*

*The Choir Immortal*
The Harvest Raise

KATIE SCHUERMANN
For Lucy, Becca, Julia, Becky, Kristi, Eliza, Emily, and Lauren, who joyfully celebrate the gifts God gives to all of us, even books

And for Michelle, whose laughter inspires me
On what has now been sown
Thy blessing, Lord, bestow,
The pow’r is Thine alone
To make it sprout and grow.
Do Thou in grace the harvest raise,
And Thou alone shalt have the praise!

(LSB 921:1)
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Character List

Pastor Michael Fletcher—the good and right reverend of Zion Lutheran Church
Mrs. Scheinberg—Zion’s secretary of forty-two years
Emily Duke—Bradbury’s resident sweetheart and doctor of music
Rebecca Jones—Emily’s best friend and local spitfire
Robbie Jones—Rebecca’s middle, freckled son
Beverly Davis—lifelong member of Zion with the gift of gab
Candice Bradbury—wife of Thomas Edison Bradbury III and rightful queen of Bradbury
Caroline Bradbury—the heiress
Ben Schmidt—enterprising farm boy and gentleman extraordinaire
Nettie Schmidt—she may be there, but she’s not all there
Janet Koelster—the fastest spatula in the Midwest
Evan Ebner—Zion’s faithful, phlegmatic organist
Blaine Maler—voted best pianist (and hair) in Bradbury
Mary Hopf—Blaine’s friend from Bradbury College
Yvonne Roe—the grumpiest beauty in all the land with a penchant for earthy piles of sand
Anna Cecilia—no one knows anything better than her, she’s certain of it
Marge Johnson—best known for her Wurlitzer vibrato
Lauren Basset—head of Bradbury College’s music department
Zachary Brandt—Bradbury College’s ever dashing, always available literature professor
The day of salvation had finally come, though it was Mrs. Arlene Compton Scheinberg—not the angel Gabriel—who sounded the proverbial trumpet.

“I’ve decided to retire,” the stodgy secretary announced before the faithful remnant gathered in the front pews of Zion Lutheran Church.

Pastor Michael Fletcher’s jaw fell into his lap. The good reverend had been praying for deliverance from the great tribulation for years—ten years, one month, and nine days, to be exact—ever since Zion’s permed pontificate had first glared at him from her leather throne in the church office and pronounced, “I have barn cats older than you.” But the man was surprised to find his blessed liberation coming on a Tuesday night of all things, for in his dreams—and he had indulged in such dreaming often—the eschatological event came at the end of a work week and in the quiet and privacy of his study. His secretary’s sensitivities were eternally opposed to his own, however. Leave it to Mrs. Scheinberg, who was herself the very opposite of an angel in both stature and countenance, to choose the middle of a church voters’ meeting to blow her horn and end life as everyone knew it in Bradbury.
“What?” Harold Schmidt hollered from his seat in the front pew, cupping an arthritic hand behind his right ear.

Mrs. Scheinberg leaned her heavy bosom forward and barked, “Retire, Hank! I’ve decided to retire!”

Harold was practically deaf, but he was the only member of the congregation yet to realize it. “New attire? I thought we came here to vote on repainting the parking lot.”

Nettie, Harold’s devoted bride of sixty years, diplomatically held up a finger to ward off the secretary’s inevitable counterattack. She grabbed a Communion card from the front pew rack, penciled the appropriate verb across the top of the card, and handed the transcription to her impervious husband.

Harold squinted at the card for a long moment before attempting—and failing—to whisper under his breath, “Hallelujah!”

Mrs. Scheinberg’s nostrils danced a flamenco.

Pastor Fletcher stood to intervene, but he fumbled his words. He honestly didn’t know what to say. Now that the happy hour of emancipation had finally arrived, he found himself inflicted with a surprising sadness. Not a full-blown, flu-like melancholy, to be sure, but a twinge, an irritation, a sniffle of sorrow, for even the merry prospect of walking a new earth free of Mrs. Scheinberg and her withering ways did not fully quell his sentimental disposition toward his secretary. The woman was exasperating—that much was certain—but she was also loyal, resourceful, and too tightly woven into the fabric of the church’s life to be yanked loose like some inconsequential thread. He opened his mouth to say as much, but Beverly Davis beat him to it.

“Oh, Arlene!” the cushy, gray-haired woman spouted, sniffing loudly in the fourth pew on the pulpit side and rummaging through her handbag for a tissue. “You can’t leave us!”

“I’m retiring, Bev,” Mrs. Scheinberg frowned, “not moving.”
“You don’t understand,” Bev blubered, her faucet now turned on full blast. “It just won’t be the same without you sitting behind that desk. You’re the only secretary our church has ever had. There’s never been anyone but you in that office.”

“Arlene is a constitution,” Nettie nodded soberly.

Bev, open-mouthed, paused to consider this fact.

“She means institution, honey,” Janet Koelster leaned over to murmur.

“Oh yes,” Bev nodded, deftly picking up where she had left off. Verbal rambles were her specialty. “I simply can’t stand the thought of someone else answering the phone whenever I call the church. It’s just not right. You belong behind that desk, Arlene. You’re irreplaceable, that’s what. I don’t care what Candice or Yvonne or anyone else says.”

Mrs. Scheinberg’s frown lines deepened into ravines. “And what, exactly, do Candice and Yvonne say?”

Candice Bradbury, the town’s self-proclaimed first lady and the congregation’s self-appointed authority in all matters of theology, sociology, psychology, kinesiology, and blame-ology, shrugged amicably from her seat next to Janet and ran a confident hand through her bobbed hair. “All I said was that it would be good to get some new blood in the office. Someone with a little more . . . mobility.”

Everyone held their breath and looked down at their laps, no doubt afraid to make eye contact with the slighted secretary currently leaning heavily on an aluminum cane. Mrs. Scheinberg, in her earlier years, would have pawed at the ground and charged the smug woman like an angry bull, but as it was, she had eaten leftover ham loaf for both lunch and supper that day and her swollen hooves were now rooted to the ground like tree stumps. She settled for defiantly lifting her two chins in the air and declaring, “That is precisely why I am retiring, Candice.”