



Good News From Zion

Connecting People with God's Grace...

February 2021

A Message from Pastor Kat

God, where are you? Have you forgotten your people? How could you let these things come to pass?

These are questions that the people of God have been asking since the very beginning. Time and again, when the people of God have experienced hardship, betrayal, violence, loneliness, and heartache, they have cried out – wondering if God is still there, if God still cares.

This Lenten season, we will hear stories from scripture underlining God's promises to us, the covenants that God has made with God's people. One of these promises is to always be there – in good times and bad.

I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. –Genesis 17:7

God speaks these words to the newly renamed Abraham, who has journeyed long, has evaded various threats and dangers along the way, and has begun to wonder if his wife, Sarah, will ever conceive a child as promised. God renews the promise that Abraham will have many descendants and further promises “to be God” to Abraham and his family “forever and ever amen!”

Many of us may feel similarly to Abraham and Sarah. We too have journeyed long. We too have sought to evade threats and dangers. We too are beginning to wonder if God has remembered us.

The words of this promise spoken long ago to Abraham are just as true for us. We belong to God, and no matter what the journey brings, God is with us.

A Hopeful Return to In-Person Worship

One thing that many of us are longing and praying for in this journey is a return to in person worship. At this past month's council meeting, council agreed to plan for in-person 15-minute communion worship services held in the church nave on Sunday at 11:00 AM beginning in the season of Lent, which starts on Sunday, February 21st. While we realize this time may not be ideal for all, we wanted to accommodate existing Christian education schedules on Sunday morning and also keep to familiar worship times.

We have also heard from the community that there is a hunger for communion from many who do not yet feel safe enough to attend in-person worship, and so council has agreed that again, starting in Lent, we will integrate virtual communion into our online worship services. The frequency of these online communion services is yet to be determined. Please, watch for further updates.

In addition, we will enter the Lenten Season on Ash Wednesday, February 17th with both an abbreviated virtual worship service and an in-person opportunity for confession and communion at the church at 7:00 pm.

We will continue to monitor infections rates given new variants and delays in vaccine distribution, but it is our hope that, starting in Lent, we can take this first step towards offering an opportunity to be present in-person for worship.

May you know that no matter what the future brings, no matter where you are in your journey, God is there with you surrounding you with love – as promised.

In Christ,
Pastor Kat

The 2021 Annual Meeting of the Congregation will be held on February 7th at 11:00 a.m. via Zoom. The congregation will vote to approve the 2021 budget, accept the 2020 Annual Report, and elect the incoming class of Council members. The Budget Q&A session will be held on Jan. 31 at 11 a.m. via Zoom. Links to both meetings will be emailed to the congregation ahead of the dates.



Congregation Council Highlights



The Council met via Zoom conference call on January 21. Below are the highlights of that meeting.

- The Council finalized plans for the January 31st Budget Q&A and the February 7th Annual Meeting of the Congregation. Both will take place via Zoom.
- Treasurer Ron Rupp reported that Zion's finances are in good shape. We ended 2020 under-budget by \$4,590.83.
- Pastor Kat reported that she received a request for a baptism and interest from someone wishing to join the church. She is making arrangements with both families to grant these requests.
- The Council reviewed a proposal from Rhonda Rossi for restructuring the Christian Education and Youth committees to form the Youth & Family committee. Final approval will be made at the February Council meeting.
- Beginning the first Sunday of Lent (February 24) an in-person Communion Service (15 minutes) will be offered on Sunday mornings at 11 a.m. at the church. A video of the full-length worship service will continue to be provided each week.
- Ash Wednesday plans include a 15-minute in-person Service of Confession and Communion, as well as a video of the full-length Ash Wednesday service.
- The Shepherding committee has been providing meals to the Forster family following the passing of Marilyn Forster.
- The Social Ministry committee will host the annual Town-Wide Tag Sale on April 24. Proceeds will benefit Family Promise.
- Thank you to:
 - * Rod Briscoe and Tim Dunn, for production of the Christmas Eve worship video.
 - * John McAleer, for his four years serving on Council. He will continue to serve as chair of the Property Committee.
 - * Meghan (Stanski) Holman, for her three years on Council and for serving as the chair of Christian Education.

The next meeting of the Congregation Council is scheduled for Thursday, February 18. Meetings are open for all to attend. If you would like to attend an upcoming meeting, please let the Parish Office know and we will send you the Zoom link.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper



Who doesn't love pancakes? Grab your spatula and favorite pancake recipe (or take advantage of a meal prepared by others) and join us for the Shrove Tuesday Virtual Pancake Feast! As we enter the Season of Lent, please join us via Zoom on Shrove Tuesday, February 16th, from 6:00 p.m. – 6:45 p.m. while we enjoy a short program and feast on delicious food.

Please sign up via the link provided by the parish office to indicate whether you would like to pick up your meal(s) or have your meal(s) delivered to you – and likewise if you would like to assist with providing food for the meals from the list above and/or help with assembling the meals, please indicate that as well. Additionally, if you would prefer to use your own food at home and just join us for the program, we will be happy to have you do that as well.

As you may recall, donations were accepted at last year's Shrove Tuesday Supper for Feed My Starving Children. To continue the tradition, donations for this project will be accepted by sending a check made out to Zion with FMSC on the memo line. However, a donation is not expected or required to attend the program.

Please contact Shellie Evers (shellie.eversafe@gmail.com) or Debra Kaufman (dkaufman1977@yahoo.com) with any questions. We look forward to seeing you on February 16th!



2021 Lenten Calendar

Sunday Worship

Beginning the first Sunday in Lent (February 21st), we will resume our 15-minute in-person Communion Service on Sundays at 11 a.m. at the church. Masks and social distancing required. Plans for Palm Sunday and Easter are still in flux.

Shrove Tuesday Pancake Supper – Tuesday, February 16th at 6:30 PM via Zoom

Join us for a short program of feasting and fellowship as we celebrate together in community in preparation for Lent. Sign-up via the link emailed from the parish office. See details on page 2.

Ash Wednesday Worship – Wed., February 17th ONLINE and IN PERSON

Online services will be shared to our YouTube channel. A 15-minute in-person Service of Confession and Communion will be held at the church at 7 p.m. - masks and social distancing required.

Wednesdays Away Cross Roads Retreat – Wed., February 17th 10 AM to 12 PM via Zoom

Meditate with local Lutherans/Christians? on the role of ritual and set an intention for the Lenten season. Register [HERE](#) by Tuesday, February 9th. Cost is \$10.

Let's Talk! – Sundays throughout Lent, starting on Sunday, February 21st

Join your friends and family at Zion and engage in weekly devotion. The link will be shared via email and the Friends and Family Facebook page. You are encouraged to pray, discuss, and reminisce. A summary of thoughts from the community will be shared anonymously on Wednesdays.

Let's Talk LIVE! – Wednesdays at 7 PM throughout Lent, starting on Wed., February 24th

Continue the conversation via Zoom on Wednesday evening. We will take time to discuss, share, and pray with one another. The link to join will be shared in our "Zion Weekly" email.

Zion's 2021 Prayer Partner Program – Throughout Lent (see page 7)

Enhance your faith life throughout the year by joining our Prayer Partner Program. Send an email to the parish office (parishadministrator@zionoldwick.com) to sign up. Get to know someone new by entering our prayer partner match or choose your own partner. Zion's "Let's Talk!" series will provide a weekly focal point as you begin your year of prayer together.

Update from the Call Committee

Hello congregation,

Unfortunately, we do not have any further candidates recommended from the synod at this time. Our Synod representative assures us they are still looking but they just have not come across any suitable candidates. We suppose that is not completely unreasonable since we just came through the holidays and COVID-19 has many things turned upside down right now.

As always, we appreciate your prayers and support and remain confident the Spirit has big things planned for us!

Yours in Christ,
The Call Committee



Reflective Thoughts from Rhonda on the New Year

Our Christian tradition depends on remembering the past. In the scriptures, we find God urging people to recall where they came from, what God has done, how they have responded to God, and who they are as a result. As Christians, we are invited to reflect, repent, and remind each other of the life Jesus calls us toward. Accepting this invitation requires us to slow down and intentionally pause to look back on our lives, whether it be yesterday, last week, or last year.



I encourage you to take some time for yourself and reflect on this past year. Acknowledge the joy and pain, the struggles, and don't forget to look for the good things that happened to you. Sometimes the bad muddles the good experiences and God's blessings.

As you reflect, think about what you are grateful for, what you are sorry for, what are you afraid of, and what are you hopeful for. Then, offer all of this through prayer to God.

In the gospel, we are encouraged to look forward. Our hope is in God who, through Jesus' life, death, and resurrection and the power of the Holy Spirit, promises to heal everything in our lives. Pain to joy. Discouragement to hope. Estrangement to unity. Hate to love. We have every reason to look forward and search for the twinkling prospect of hope and healing.

2021 needs to be its own year—rather than “Not 2020.” Let's welcome this new year God is calling us into with compassion and love, creativity, and courage.

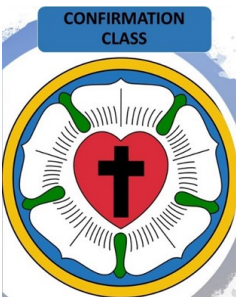


Zion's Sunday School for grades PreK-6th grade will continue to meet on-line via Zoom. We begin each class at 9:30 am with Rod Briscoe introducing our lesson and leading us in fun songs. Then, we divide into 2 groups for our lessons. Sandy Matsen teaches the 2nd – 6th grade while Melanie Hodges teaches PreK – 1st grade. The Sunday School Zoom links can be found in the Zion Weekly Constant Contact email that is sent out on Wednesdays. We look forward to seeing the kids on Sundays and we encourage you to join us!



HOLD THE DATES FOR FIRST COMMUNION!

Plans are being made to hold First Communion classes for the current 4th and 5th graders. Classes will begin on Sunday, April 18th with First Communion being held on Sunday, May 23rd. A letter with detailed information will be mailed out to parents later in February. For more information, please contact me at youth@zionoldwick.com



Zion's Confirmation Class continues to meet Sundays at 10:00 am via Zoom. The Confirmation Class Zoom links can be found in the Zion Weekly Constant Contact email that is sent out on Wednesdays. We have incorporated Kahoot (an online game platform) into our lesson. We use Kahoot as a review for previous lessons. The kids are enjoying this added feature and we continue to look for more interactive platforms to help with the lessons. In the spring, we hope to have Pastor Kat lead the group in two lessons: Prayer and The Trinity.



Zion's youth have been conducting a non-perishable food drive for this year's national Souper Bowl of Caring event. Individually, the youth have been collecting food from their families, friends, and neighbors. In addition, a bin has been placed in the CEB entryway for congregational donations. Some of the youth will be gathering on **Tuesday, Feb. 9th at 6:30 pm** to count the items they collected. Any food donations must be made by then to be included in our count. The collected number of food items will be reported to the national Souper Bowl of Caring organization, making Zion's youth contributors to and participants in the national effort to tackle hunger. Zion's collected food will be divided evenly between the Flemington Area Food Pantry and the Open Cupboard Food Pantry in Clinton. Our goal is to collect 300 items. Thank you for helping us in this important mission!



2021 CROSS ROADS VIRTUAL YOUTH RETREATS

Grades K – 2: Saturday, February 13 from 10 am – 12 pm

Grades 3 – 5: Saturday, February 13 from 1 – 3 pm

Grades 6 – 8: Saturday, March 13 from 10 am – 12 pm

EXPLORE! with Cross Roads this winter at their virtual youth retreats. Over the course of a few hours, kids and youth leaders will EXPLORE the ways God is present in our world and in our lives. We will play games, read stories from the Bible, get moving, worship together, and have fun!

Please contact Rhonda Rossi at youth@zionoldwick.com or 973-219-8333 for more information and to register.

The registration fee of \$15 will be paid by the Zion Youth Account.

Social Ministry Update

Tag Sale Saturday, April 24th

While this event was sadly cancelled in 2020, Social Ministry is moving forward with plans for this coming April. Please keep us in mind and hold onto any saleable items you may have, please no books or clothing. Donations can be dropped off at the CEB any time after Easter Sunday, April 4th. For larger or bulky items that need to go directly into the Great Room, please contact Rebecca Melick at rrmelick@gmail.com or 908-229-3744.

All proceeds collected go towards scholarships for children of Family Promise to attend summer camp at Cross Roads. The children have loved this experience that would otherwise not be available to them.

Volunteers will be needed to help sort and price items during the week prior to the sale and many will be needed at the sale to help move, set up and sell on April 4th.

Coffee Collection for Faith Kitchen

The annual Coffee Drive to benefit Faith Kitchen is continuing through the end of February. Please bring your cans of coffee to the CEB any time between now and February 28th.

Blood Drive

Please mark your calendar for our first Blood Drive of 2021, to be held at the CEB on April 6th.

Join our friends at Cross Roads for **Wednesdays Away**, a time of spiritual renewal one Wednesday a month from September through June. This year we will continue to gather virtually from 10:00 am to 12:00 pm on Zoom. Our time together includes prayer and conversation, led by a spiritual director and focusing on a different spiritual practice or theme each month. The cost is \$10 per gathering. These monthly retreats are open to all people interested in exploring new faith practices. Attend one or attend all—and be sure to invite friends to join you. Visit www.crossroadsretreat.com to find out more and to register.

This month, we will gather on Ash Wednesday, February 17th. The program will be “What Will We Do Without Ashes?” led by Pastor Dale Selover. We will consider the role of ritual, and set our intention for our forty-day Lenten journey.

CROSS ROADS
CAMP AND RETREAT CENTER

Faith Kitchen Ministry provides First Lunches for 2021

Zion provided 70 brown bag lunches this month. The volunteers did an awesome job – Sandy Matsen, John and Wendy Minerowicz, Linda Lovas, John McAleer and Todd and Stacey Rothermel. Kade Iervolino also joined us to set up the bags – he has been a wonderful volunteer at Zion during his college winter break. A generous Zion member also contributed microwaveable soups to be included in the bags this month. Thanks to all that supported this ministry in January!



This ministry prepares lunches every first Thursday of each month – **February 4th** is our next opportunity to serve. Please join us at the CEB at 8:30 AM if you would like to assist with this ministry. Any questions? Call Debra Kaufman at 703-402-2158.



Stacey Rothermel, Linda Lovas,
Wendy Minerowicz



Todd Rothermel, John Minerowicz,
John McAleer, Sandy Matsen



Kade Iervolino

Women of Zion Committee holds 2021 Planning Session



The Women of Zion (WOZ) committee has been formally established as part of the Parish Life committee. The committee's purpose is to guide WOZ activities throughout the year that will continue to strengthen the **entire** community of women at Zion Lutheran Church.

At the planning session, the committee brainstormed ideas for numerous activities covering four areas: Spiritual, Health, Fellowship, and Arts & Crafts. The following activities were chosen for the upcoming months.

February – Partner with Parish Life to launch Prayer Partner program (see details below)

Ash Wednesday – Cross Roads' Wednesdays Away program led by Pastor Dale Selover

March – Watercolor Painting Class (via Zoom)

April – Trail Walk

May – Mother's Day Tea

The committee members are Nova Ahrens, Judy Formalarie, Debra Kaufman (WOZ chair), Wendy Minerowicz, Kathy Rustwick, Barb Surhoff and Anita Zarate. Our advisors are Shellie Evers (chair of Parish Life) and Pastor Kat.

The committee welcomes input from ALL women of Zion to ensure that we plan events that will be meaningful for you. Please reach out to any of us with your ideas. We look forward to seeing you at our upcoming events!

*Do you wish that you spent more time in prayer?
Have you been feeling alone in your faith journey?*

Join Zion's 2021 Prayer Partner Program!

Sponsored by the Parish Life Committee

HOW DO I JOIN?

- Raise your hand! This program is for ALL members of Zion – men, women, children, and friends
- Send an email to the church office, or contact:
Shellie Evers shellie.eversafe@gmail.com or 804-678-8993
Debra Kaufman dkaufman1977@yahoo.com or 703-402-2158
Kathy Rustwick kfrust@hotmail.com or 908-328-4362
- A Prayer Partner will be assigned to you, or you may pick your own!
- Pray with your partner and be encouraged.

Zion will support the Prayer Partners program with:

- ✓ Seasonal devotions, beginning with Lent.
- ✓ Meditation words/bible verses to encourage discussion.
- ✓ Optional Zoom prayer pal meetings to strengthen our prayer practices.

The Power of Prayer

*Strengthens our relationship with God
Expresses our dependency on God
Acknowledges the care and power of God*

James 4:8 Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

Stewardship Review

Season of Epiphany

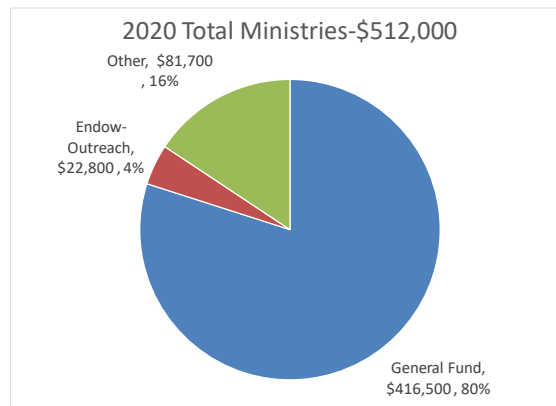
We are in the season of Epiphany. The first story told is of magi who brought gifts to Jesus in Bethlehem. They serve as role models for all of us who want to express our profound gratitude for the ways that God has blessed our lives with love and filled us with grace and peace. As we continue to experience the effects of the pandemic, it is time to reflect on how we will respond and address how this could affect our offering income. Instead of expecting decline, we can begin to imagine what is possible when God's power and love and self-discipline transform a time of potential scarcity into a time of abundant sharing.



General Fund Giving 2020

As the income and expenses for 2020 were reviewed, the statement that was heard over and over was "We are blessed." Income was down, but so were expenses. We have been able to fully fund our mission and ministry at Zion with the offerings we have received. We are blessed. This gives us even more trust and hope for the days ahead.

In 2020, 21 pledging families gave even more than they pledged. In addition, 23 non-pledging families gave more in 2020 than in 2019. Not only were we able to meet vital ministry in our own congregation, but we also had the potential of giving to others who are doing God's work in the world.



2021: God's Work, Our Response

We have received 50 pledges totaling \$269,500. 24 of these families have increased their support for our work. For ministry planning, we must estimate giving for families that have not pledged and for Plate and Special Services. This planning number is:

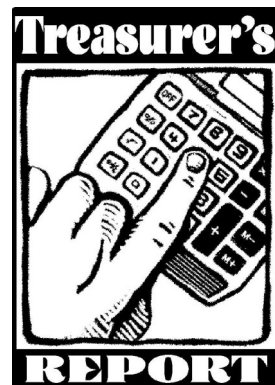
Pledging Families	\$269,500
Non-pledging Families	\$ 99,900
Plate and Special Services	<u>\$ 10,000</u>
Total	\$379,400

Again we have noted that 23 of the non-pledging families increased their giving in 2020 over 2019. We want Zion's ministries to continue strongly. We increased our Operating Reserve in 2020 and we plan to use a portion of this amount to continue our ministries for 2021. To continue beyond this year, we will need to grow our financial giving this year and the years to come. Together, we know that we can rise to this occasion as a congregation of generous and mission-focused people.

Thank you for your support of Zion's ministries.

Stewardship committee

FINANCIAL SUMMARY - 2020



GENERAL FUND	INCOME	EXPENSE	DIFFERENCE
January	\$34,281.28	\$29,374.56	\$4,906.72
February	\$35,792.05	\$31,658.08	\$4,133.97
March	\$25,760.26	\$30,965.46	-\$5,205.20
April	\$32,263.96	\$27,259.26	\$5,004.70
May	\$27,194.61	\$30,039.33	-\$2,844.72
June	\$23,131.66	\$23,059.62	\$72.04
July	\$34,455.29	\$34,271.67	\$183.62
August	\$31,289.53	\$29,853.14	\$1,436.39
September	\$27,370.15	\$30,509.56	-\$3,139.41
October	\$24,742.51	\$26,617.75	-\$1,875.24
November	\$47,156.82	\$50,084.32	-\$2,927.50
December	\$33,915.01	\$29,069.55	\$4,845.46
Year To Date Total	\$377,353.13	\$372,762.30	\$4,590.83

TD BANK FUNDS	BALANCE	
Checking Account (PPP \$37,065.00)	\$97,749.63	12/31/2020 Bank Statement
Money Market Plus	\$152,895.14	12/31/2020 Bank Statement
Cash On Hand	\$250,644.77	

Directed Funds	\$158,924.52	12/31/2020
Operating Funds	\$91,720.25	12/31/2020
Cash On Hand	\$250,644.77	

ENDOWMENT FUNDS	BALANCE	
CFNJ	\$508,020.06	(12/31/20)
THRIVENT	\$364,715.15	(12/31/20)
TOTAL	\$872,735.21	

ENDOWMENT MISSION OUTREACH

Available Funds for 2020	\$22,766.00
2019 Carryover Funds	\$9.66
Faith Kitchen	-\$1,000.00 Approved 5/2020, disbursed 5/27/2020
Crossroads Camp and Retreat Center	-\$2,500.00 Approved 6/2020, disbursed 6/24/2020
NJ Synod Compensation Aid Fund	-\$1,500.00 Approved 9/2020, disbursed 9/16/2020
2019 God's Work Our Hands	-\$243.86 September Finance Comm. transfer 9/30/2020
Feed My Starving Children	-\$5,000.00 Approved 10/2020, internal transfer 10/18/2020
Good News Home for Women	-\$1,000.00 Approved 10/2020, disbursed 10/27/2020
ELCA Fund for Leaders	-\$1,000.00 Disbursed 10/27/2020
St. James Social Service Corp	-\$2,000.00 Disbursed 10/27/2020
Binnacle House	-\$2,000.00 Disbursed in December
Shoprite Food Cards	-\$2,000.00 Disbursed in December
Internal Transfer	-\$172.00 Internal Transfer in December
NJ Synod Fund for Mission	-\$4,359.80 Sent by Council Motion
2020 Endowment Funds Remaining	\$0.00