



Good News From Zion

Connecting People with God's Grace...

March 2021

A Message from Pastor Kat

As we continue our Lenten walk this coming month, we mark a terrible anniversary – one year since the beginning of restrictions and the greatest wave of infections and fatalities caused by the COVID-19 virus. This past year has been a long and tiresome journey filled with challenges that have left many of us sad, weary, and desperate for an end to our trials and a return to normal life.

At the end of this month, we will mark Palm/Passion Sunday and hear the story of Jesus' final days. This year, perhaps more than ever, we can sympathize with Jesus and the disciples as they walk the hard and painful road to the cross. After all, haven't we too found ourselves in denial like the disciples unable to believe that one of them will betray Jesus or overcome by exhaustion like the disciples sleeping through Jesus' prayer in the garden?

As we hear once more Jesus' desperate prayer for "this cup to pass," we may reflect on our own desperate prayers this past year for an end to the suffering caused by the coronavirus. As we hear Jesus' anguished call, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" we may remember our own feelings of being abandoned and know with certainty that Jesus has experienced our pain.

Celebrating Full Worship In-Person

At this past month's council meeting, the council agreed to plan for full in-person worship services held in the church nave on Sundays at 10:30 AM beginning on Palm/Passion Sunday, March 28th. This change in service time was chosen to try and accommodate those who would like to attend worship earlier, while also providing time for Sunday School and Confirmation classes.

It is our hope that we will begin live-streaming worship on this same date to accommodate those who do not yet feel safe returning to in person worship. We also hope that we will be able to continue these online live-streamed worship services beyond the epidemic as a means of outreach.

Please, watch our weekly email announcements for details about a Holy Week schedule as it is still evolving at the current time.

As we step into this next month, may we remember that God is with us and has walked before us.

In Christ,
Pastor Kat

COVID-19 Vaccine Information

New Jersey Website: visit covid19.nj.gov for updated information. This website provides online registration, a list of current eligibility requirements, and a list of available vaccine sites in New Jersey.

For those without internet access, please call 855-568-0545.



Congregation Council Highlights



The Council met via Zoom conference call on February 18. Below are the highlights of that meeting.

- The Council welcomed its two new members — Ken Bryson and Melanie Hodges. Ken will chair the Communications committee and Melanie is chairing the Youth & Family / Christian Education committee.
- Treasurer Ron Rupp reported that TD Bank has approved the \$37,000 Payroll Protection Program loan we received in 2020 to be forgiven as a grant. We are awaiting final approval from the Small Business Administration.
- Pastor Kat's hours have been increased from three days to four days a week. This will enable her to be present for leading worship on Sundays and enhance her ability to better serve the people of Zion during this time of transition.
- Rhonda Rossi reported that Lenten Kits were delivered to all Sunday School families. These include activities and crafts for families during Lent.
- Youth leadership of Second Sunday services has returned! The February 14th worship video contained readings and prayers from several of our youth, and plans are in place to include the youth again on March 14th.
- The Council welcomed new member Joe Iannacone. Joe is a history teacher and a resident of Tewksbury. He grew up in the Lutheran church and looks forward to getting to know the Zion congregation.
- The Prayer Partner program has launched and 15 people are participating. (See page 7 for more information.)
- The Shepherding committee is calling all 150 families in the congregation to check in and let them know Zion is thinking of them.
- The Worship & Music committee is planning our return to full-length in-person worship services on March 28th at 10:30 a.m. These services will be livestreamed for those who are not yet ready to attend in person.
- The Council approved the Tewksbury Historical Society's request to use the Great Room on October 3-16, 2021 for their annual Art Show.
- Thank you to:
 - * Shellie & Eric Evers, for hosting the Shrove Tuesday Virtual Pancake Supper, and to Pastor Kat & Rod Briscoe for leading the program.

The next meeting of the Congregation Council is scheduled for Thursday, March 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.

Update from the Call Committee

Hello Congregation,

Quick update on the call process. We are having a second interview/discussion with our second candidate on Wednesday, 2/24. The Call Committee unanimously agreed to have a second meeting since there was quite a bit more to discuss and we didn't have a sufficient chance to ask us enough questions. The candidate and the Call Committee both agreed there is plenty of interest to continue the conversation! After this next meeting, the Call Committee will either formally halt the process with this candidate or will recommend this person to the church council. As always, please continue to keep us in your prayers!

Peace,
Mike





2021 Lenten Calendar

Sunday Worship

Beginning the first Sunday in Lent, we resumed our 15-minute in-person Communion Service on Sundays at 11 a.m. at the church. Masks and social distancing are required. Plans for Palm Sunday and Easter are yet to be determined.

Let's Talk! – Sundays throughout Lent

Join your friends and family at Zion and engage in weekly devotion. The link to Pastor Kat's video introducing each week's topic 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

Continue the "Let's Talk" conversation via Zoom on Wednesday evenings at 7 p.m. Led by Pastor Kat, we will take time to discuss, share, and pray with one another. The link to join will be shared in our "Zion Weekly" email sent on Wednesday mornings.

Zion's 2021 Prayer Partner Program – Throughout Lent

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. Please see page 7 for more information.



Save the Date!

Vacation Bible School
June 28 – July 2

Zion is making plans for this summer's VBS!

All children ages 3 through completion of 5th grade are invited to discover that *they're priceless to God*. To keep everyone safe, we are planning to hold VBS outside. All CDC guidelines will be followed and there will be limited enrollment.

We will need pop-up shade canopies. If you have a canopy that we could borrow for the week, please contact Melanie Hodges at 908-568-7583.



Zion Friends and Family on Facebook!

Have you joined the "Zion Friends and Family" group on Facebook? It's a great place to connect with Zion, especially when we are not seeing each other as much as we would like. Search for the group today and send a Join Request!

Youth and Family Ministries Update by Rhonda Rossi

Souper Bowl of Caring



The youth of Zion held a three week long, non-perishable food drive to support the National Souper Bowl of Caring organization. On Friday, Feb. 12th, four youth and six adults gathered to count the collected food. We are pleased to announce that we collected 589 food items exceeding our goal of 300 items! The donated food was split evenly between the Open Cupboard Food Pantry in Clinton and the Flemington Food Pantry. Thank you to all who supported our event. Thanks to Robert Bryan, Rebecca Melick, Carol Anne, Kailey and Laura Bredeson, Mara and Jeff Livingston, and Shellie & Eric Evers for their help in counting the food. Special thanks to Shellie and Eric for delivering the food to the Flemington Food Pantry and to Jeff Livingston for delivering food to the Open Cupboard Food Pantry in Clinton. Our collection was reported to the Souper Bowl of Caring Organization placing Zion as a contributor to their national fight against hunger.



Pictured are Rhonda Rossi, Carl Anne Bredeson, Mara Livingston, Kailey Bredeson, and Jeff Livingston

Lent for Families of All Sizes



Lent Devotions and Lenten Activity Kits

Lent Devotions were mailed to families with Pre- K through High School aged students. In addition, Family Lenten Activity Kits were either mailed or “porch dropped” delivered for families with children Pre-K through 6th Grade. The kits include, Family Conversation Cards, a Prayer Catcher, and a Lenten Egg Activity. If you did not receive a Lenten Kit and would like one, please contact Rhonda Rossi at youth@zionoldwick.com.

Research shows that parents are one of the primary influences on their child’s faith. Families who worship together and practice faith rituals in their homes actively encourage their children’s spiritual growth so it will stick with them into adulthood, which in turn will empower them to develop a lifelong, lasting faith.

Vibrant Faith Ministries (The Youth and Family Institute), a faith-based organization founded in 1997 (the name was changed in 2010) was developed to help families of all sizes and shapes, and church leaders instill lasting faith in children and young adults. Vibrant Faith has a **FREE** website with a wealth of activities designed to be used in the home for faith formation. **You will find activities for all ages: Families with Children, Just for Kids, Teens and Family, Young Adults, Adults and Couples, and Intergenerational Activities.**

During this time of Lent, I encourage you to try some of these activities. Check out the website: www.vibrantfaithprojects.org/vibrant-faith-home and let me know what you think!



Sunday School for grades PreK-6th grade continues to meet on-line via Zoom. We begin each class at 9:30 a.m. 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 email that is sent out on Wednesdays. We look forward to seeing the kids on Sundays and encourage you to join us!



A CHANGE IN FIRST COMMUNION DATES!

Plans are being made to hold First Communion classes for the current 4th and 5th graders. Classes will begin on **Sunday, April 11th** with First Communion being held on **Sunday, May 16th**. Pastor Kat and Rhonda Rossi will be teaching the classes virtually via Zoom. Watch for the detailed letter that is being mailed out to parents this month. For more information, please contact Rhonda Rossi at youth@zionoldwick.com.



CLASS TIME CHANGE FOR CONFIRMATION

Zion's Confirmation Class is meeting Sundays at **9:45 a.m.** via Zoom. The class time was changed to give folks the opportunity to attend the in-person, Sunday Confession and Communion services being held at the church at 11 a.m. The class has concluded their lessons on the Old Testament and is currently studying the New Testament. Pastor Kat will be joining us on March 7th, 14th and 23rd. She will lead the group in two lessons: Prayer and The Trinity. Zoom links for the class can be found in the Zion Weekly email that is sent out on Wednesdays.

CROSS ROADS MARCH RETREATS

EXPLORE!

Middle School Retreat

Saturday, March 13th 10 am – 12 pm

EXPLORE! with Cross Roads this March by attending their virtual middle school youth retreat. Over the course of a few hours, middle school youth and youth leaders will EXPLORE the ways God is present in our world and in our lives. This retreat is especially designed with middle school youth in mind. The retreat will include games, discovering Bible stories, worship, and will get the kids moving and have fun! For more information, please contact Rhonda Rossi at youth@zionoldwick.com.



Adult Retreat — Wednesdays Away



Join Cross Roads for Wednesdays Away, a time of spiritual renewal one Wednesday a month from September through June. Currently, all gatherings are virtual 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. Wendy Abrahamson will be leading the **Wednesday, March 3rd** retreat. For more information on Wednesdays Away or to register, please visit the Cross Roads website: <https://www.crossroadsretreat.com/wednesdays-away/> or you may contact Rhonda Rossi at youth@zionoldwick.com

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 24th.



Food Pantry donation list for February & March — Supporting the Food2You program

The Food2You program represents a partnership between the Flemington Food Pantry and the Hunterdon Healthcare System. Social workers identify people who are being released from the hospital after surgery/illness and refer them to the Food Pantry. The Food Pantry assigns a “driver” to identify an individual’s food needs and deliver food to them. They often have different food needs given they are mostly elderly, live alone and have simplified diets. Please see the list below for the items that are most needed. **During the pandemic, it has been even more critical to ensure that these clients receive the nutrition they need. Currently there are 30 clients in this program.**

Food2You Donation List

- Single pack tuna fish pouches
- Half-sized canned vegetables
- ENSURE – vanilla and chocolate
- Small plastic bottles of cranberry or orange juice
- Individual servings of applesauce



We will continue to deliver all donations for the Flemington Area Food Pantry, including items from the broader list on their website.

Faith Kitchen — February Brown Bag Lunches *by Debra Kaufman*

Zion supports Faith Kitchen through the annual budget. And then, we gather an awesome group of volunteers. February's volunteers were Stacey, Todd, Wendy, John, Linda, and John. They were the most efficient sandwich makers... this month we packed 70 ham and cheese sandwiches with lettuce and tomato, goldfish crackers, sweet treats, clementines, and a microwaveable mac and cheese for a "second meal". All are welcome to join this ministry - first Thursdays at the CEB at 8:45AM. Did I say awesome volunteers ?? :)



Women of Zion Watercolor Paint Class — Zoom Event

When: Thursday, March 25th

Time: 7 – 8:30 pm

Where: ZOOM

What: Flowers and spring scenes which can be used for Easter cards for our homebound members or others

Cost: \$15 for supplies (supplies will be available for pick-up at the CEB)



Watch for the sign-up that will be emailed from the Parish Office or contact Debra Kaufman at 703-402-2158 or Wendy Minerowicz at 908-832-0730.

No experience is needed – we will be guided by a wonderful artist!

Parish Life Update

Shrove Tuesday

Thanks to everyone who was able to join us for the **Shrove Tuesday** program on Zoom. Pastor Kat and Rod Briscoe provided a fantastic program and it was wonderful to see everyone virtually!



2021 Prayer Partner Matches	
Jade DiCriscio	Judy Formalarie
Judy Formalarie	Debra Kaufman
Cindy Rupprecht	Rebecca Melick
Anita Zarate	Kathy Rustwick
Elizabeth Blackwood	Sue Swanson
Betty Lanka	Barb Surhoff
Elaine Jermansen	Sandy Matsen
Elsie Ehmann	Nova Ahrens DiCriscio

Prayer Partners

The 2021 Prayer Partner program has officially begun! 15 members have set out on a journey to expand their prayer lives together, however the door is always open! If you haven't signed up yet, but decide at any time throughout the year that you would like to join us – please reach out!



Shepherding Committee Update

You may be getting a call from a phone number you don't recognize! We care about how you're doing! Six members of the Shepherding Committee are calling all 150 Zion families over the next month! Please feel free to share your concerns, joys, and suggestions – or just talk and catch up!

Those making the calls are Eric and Shellie Evers, Judy Formalarie, Kathy Rustwick, Cindy Rupprecht, and Debra Kaufman. We look forward to talking with you!



A Little Giggle from Shepherding...

What time of day was Adam created? Just a little before Eve.

Stewardship and Lent

Viewpoint of the Season of Lent

We are in the season of Lent. It is the second time of preparation in the church year. Advent marks the journey of Christ into the world. Lent marks Christ's journey to us. On this more intimate trip Christ enters our own lives. He comes to each person with purpose and fury, as if they were the only person who exists in the world. How on earth can we prepare for this?



Thoughts on Stewardship

The lesson we heard on Ash Wednesday contains a truth about how we live our lives. Matthew 6:19-21 says "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. **For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.**"

How can we prepare to let Christ enter into our life? Traditionally, Lent has been a time to give something up. However, it can be a time to add something. This could be the time to ensure that your support of God's work will happen regularly and automatically. At Zion, seven families have already fulfilled their 2021 pledge. In addition, another 17 families are giving regularly with either Simply Giving or Tithely. Either of these electronic methods can be used to make a one-time gift or can be set up to give on a regular weekly or monthly basis. Go to www.zionoldwick.com/give/ for details.

A View from the Pew

For Todd and Stacey Rothermel, Zion and going to church is and has been an important part of their life. During the past year they have missed the routine of going to church on a Sunday and worshipping with the wonderful people of Zion.

"The weekly virtual services certainly aren't the same but help to remind us of all our blessings, how important worship is to us and that God IS with us in these challenging times, always! Throughout the past year we have realized the daily workings of the church has continued, even increased, over these many months. The expenses to keep all this mission and ministry going continue and are needed in order to maintain all that our church does. We signed up and use Simply Giving to contribute to the church without having to give our contribution a second thought. In these times this has become even more of a convenience than in the past. Not being present in the service to physically give the offering each week but knowing the needs are still there, make automatic contributions that much more beneficial for all. Just as we depend on our monthly income to pay bills, the church does as well. Being able to depend on this monthly support enables the church to plan and do accordingly. These are very difficult, uncertain times for so many, but God's work doesn't stop. We look forward to the day we can be back in the Sanctuary for worship, with each day it gets closer, but until then Zion will continue as a pillar in Oldwick, the state of NJ and far across the borders, in the communities near and far, for generations to come."

As you journey through this Lenten season of preparation, please consider joining with these families that have made the decision to ensure their support of our ministries is not affected by COVID or by not having in person worship at the church.

Thank you.

The Stewardship committee

FINANCIAL SUMMARY - YTD 2021

GENERAL FUND	INCOME	EXPENSE	DIFFERENCE
January	\$25,231.84	-\$22,004.39	\$3,227.45
Year To Date Total	\$25,231.84	-\$22,004.39	\$3,227.45

TD BANK FUNDS	BALANCE	
Checking Account PPP \$37,065.00	\$113,789.69	2/3/2021 Bank Statement
Money Market Plus	\$152,916.29	1/31/2021 Bank Statement
Cash On Hand	\$266,705.98	
Directed Funds	\$199,570.72	1/31/2021
Operating Funds	\$67,135.26	1/31/2021
Cash On Hand	\$266,705.98	

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 2021	\$23,500.00
2021 Endowment Funds Remaining	\$23,500.00

