



Good News from Zion

Connecting People with God's Grace

December 2022

A Message from Pastor Kat

Wake Up!

This Advent, Jesus urges his disciples and us to “keep awake” as we await his coming (Luke 24:42-44). Vigilance is necessary as there will not necessarily be any obvious warning signs before Jesus’ arrival.

This may seem like a particularly difficult assignment in a season where the dark nights stretch to their longest and daylight is in short supply. Many of us are also busy with lengthy to-do lists that demand much of our energy and attention. How are we to stay alert in such a time as this?

I don’t think Jesus means for us to pull an all-nighter or imbibe an extra shot of caffeine to keep awake. The wakefulness Jesus describes would be better served by taking special care of our bodies and minds, as well as by setting healthy boundaries around tasks and responsibilities.

Sitting in Darkness

The human body needs darkness to get proper rest. This is why certain light-emitting electronics, like phones and computers, can play havoc with our circadian rhythms and prevent us from sleeping well.

In Advent, we embrace the darkness that lengthens around us. We are invited to take time to spiritually rest our souls, to take a break from the overstimulating light and noise of modern life. Then, we can see more clearly and notice more quickly God’s presence.

I pray you find time this Advent to sit in darkness and rest, so that you can then recognize and embrace the light of Christ shining in your life.

In Christ,
Pastor Kat

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS AT ZION

**Nov. 30,
Dec. 7, 14, 21**
6:30 p.m.

Wednesdays in Advent
Midweek Gathering with Pastor Kat
“Studying the Psalms” (CEB)

November 27
8:30 & 11 a.m.
9:45 a.m.

First Sunday of Advent
Services of Holy Communion
Sunday School & Confirmation Class

December 4
8:30 & 11 a.m.
9:45 a.m.
9:45 a.m.

Second Sunday of Advent
Services of Holy Communion
Sunday School & Confirmation Class
Special Meeting of the Congregation (Church)

4 p.m.

Advent Parish Night (CEB)

December 11
8:30 & 11 a.m.
9:45 a.m.

Third Sunday of Advent
Services of Holy Communion
Sunday School & Confirmation Class

December 18
10 a.m.

Fourth Sunday of Advent
Single Service featuring the
Sunday School Christmas Program

December 24
5 p.m.

Christmas Eve
Service of Candlelight Communion
and Carols (with Bell Choir)
Service of Candlelight Communion
and Carols (with Parish Choir)

December 25
11 a.m.

Christmas Day
Service of Holy Communion



Church Council Highlights



The Church Council met via Zoom conference call on October 27th and November 17th. Below are the highlights of those meetings.

- The Worship & Music committee reported that Christmas Eve services will take place at 5:00 and 8:00 p.m. Musical offerings will be provided by the Bell Choir at 5 p.m. and the Parish Choir at 8 p.m.
- The 8:30 a.m. service is in need of worship assistants — greeters, ushers, and assisting ministers.
- There is concern about the number of volunteers available to serve at Faith Kitchen on the third Saturday of each month. If we are unable to secure more volunteers, we may not be able to continue with the Saturday days of service. The first Thursday opportunities to serve continue to be well attended.
- The Council voted to receive seven new members into the congregation at the 11 a.m. service on November 20th. They are Melanie Bychkowski, Josh & Kelly Clark, Allyson Janssen, Sara Reilly, and Michele & Todd Stevens.
- Sunday School has been averaging 15-20 kids per Sunday (grades PK-12).
- The Tewksbury Township fire marshal has determined that there are violations at the church that need to be addressed, including the need for a second means of egress. Helen Livingston, Property committee chairperson, is working with the fire marshal to determine next steps.
- David Blackwood attended the November 17th meeting to share an evangelism opportunity with the Council. The Gideons have created a program called “Conversations” that will train members in learning to share their faith in new ways. The Evangelism committee is sponsoring a training session for January 14th at the CEB.
- The Finance committee has completed their final draft of the 2023 proposed budget, to be presented to the congregation at the Special Meeting on December 4th.
- The Worship & Music committee will be decorating the church for Christmas on Saturday, 12/10, at 9 a.m. Volunteers are welcome!
- Donations from the congregation for the Thanksgiving Adopt-a-Family program benefitting the Harvest Family Success Center yielded enough contributions to complete 55 meals.
- The Social Ministry committee is planning a Feed My Starving Children MobilePack for May 19-20, 2023.
- Halloween Hospitality was a success — over 200 bags were handed out to trick-or-treaters.
- The Sunday School Christmas pageant will take place on December 18th at a 10 a.m. single service.
- This year’s Stewardship campaign focused on Blessing Future Generations, with an emphasis on the need to be able to financially support the Director of Youth & Family Ministries position. Thus far, 17 families have increased their pledge or submitted a pledge for the first time. We have not yet met our goal for supporting the Youth & Family position. Zion’s ability to minister to our youth and families will be significantly impacted if we cannot hire a new Director.
- The Nominating committee has completed their slate for 2023 Council nominees. Nominated for a 2-year term on Council are Colin Brokaw, Ken Bryson (second term), Janet Hornich, and Rebecca Melick. Donna Reilly is being nominated to fill a 1-year term.
- Thank you to:
 - * Laura Bredeson, Colin Brokaw, Lou DiCriscio, Jodi Ennis, Tom Held, and Allyson Janssen for delivering Temple Talks during Stewardship season.
 - * Eric Evers for constructing the concrete frame for the original church cornerstone.
 - * Sandy Matsen, for coordinating the Stewardship and All Saints all-school events for our Sunday School students.
 - * Debra Kaufman and Anita Zarate for hosting the Women of Zion Thanksgiving Dinner.

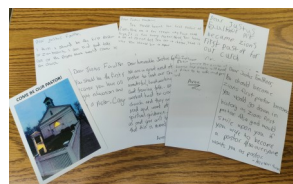
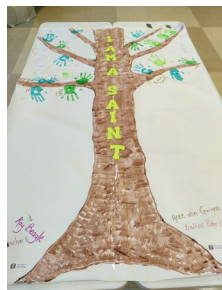
The next meeting of the Congregation Council is scheduled for Thursday, December 15th. Meetings are open for all to attend. If you would like to attend an upcoming meeting, please let the Parish Office know and we will send you the Zoom link.

Youth & Family Ministry at Zion



We Learned About Zion's History!

On November 6th Zion's young people celebrated All Saints Day and learned about some of the key figures in the story of our congregation. Many thanks to Sandy Matsen and Pastor Kat for creating this special experience for the kids!



A Blessed Day of Affirmation!

We congratulate our three graduating confirmands (Teddy Lanka, Kayden O'Connor-Shin, and Jess Rodrick) on taking the next step in their faith journey by affirming their baptism. Thanks to all who joined us in worship and for the reception at the CEB. We have gained three new adult members with gifts and dreams to share!



Holiday Lights Hayride — December 11th

All youth in grades 4-12 and their families are invited to join the new cooperative youth group for a Holiday Lights Hayride on December 11th. We'll meet at 4:30 p.m. at Faith Lutheran Church in Hillsborough to get introduced and organized, then proceed to Norz Hill Farm for an evening of holiday fun. Please sign up via the link that was emailed from the Parish Office or call 908-439-2040.

Sunday School Christmas Pageant — December 18th

Single Service at 10 a.m. at the Church

We plan to celebrate the Christmas story in fine Zion style with a Christmas pageant put on by the Sunday School and Confirmation students. All children and youth are welcome to participate! The pageant will be featured at a **single service at 10 a.m.** on Sunday, December 18th at the church. Stay and enjoy some Christmas sweets after the service!



Season of Connection is back!



*Connecting Zion
congregants, local
kids and families in
need, the broader
community, and
the world — with
God's grace!*

1 Faith Kitchen

December 1st & 17th

2 Alternative Giving

Gifts available until
December 4th

3 The Giving Tree

Gifts to be delivered by
December 4th

4 Advent Parish Night

December 4th

5 Tewksbury Tree & Menorah Lighting

December 11th

6 Women of Zion Cookie Exchange

December 13th

There are many opportunities to connect with one another, our community, and our neighbors in need during the Christmas season. Please see the information below as well as the articles on page 5 for all the details.

Outreach Opportunities — Season of Connection



Faith Kitchen — On Thursday, December 1st, and Saturday, December 17th, Zion's volunteers will travel to Dover to serve at Faith Kitchen. This is a wonderful opportunity to provide a holiday meal to our neighbors in need this season. Please contact Debra Kaufman at dkaufman1977@yahoo.com or 703-402-2158 to be a part of this vital ministry. New volunteers are always welcome!



Alternative Giving — Alternative Giving is a way you can "gift" a friend or loved one and also do some good in the world. With each donation, you will get a card with the organization's information and a small ornament/gift that represents the charity, which you can give to that special person on your list. This year's charities are the International Fund for Animal Welfare (\$5), Meals on Wheels of Hunterdon County (\$10), My Stuff Bags Foundation (\$15), and ELCA Good Gifts — Feed a Refugee Family (\$20). Alternative Gifts are available for purchase at the CEB until December 4th. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Held at 908-399-8892 or heldo4@comcast.net.



The Giving Tree — The Giving Tree is Zion's tradition of supporting the families of Family Promise at Christmastime. Congregation members are invited to choose one of the 54 ornaments from one of the trees (located at both the CEB and the church) and shop for the gift indicated on the ornament. Gifts should be placed in a gift bag with the ornament tag attached to the bag. Please place your gift under the tree at either the CEB or the church no later than Sunday, December 4th. Happy shopping!



Special Meeting of the Congregation — December 4th

There will be a Special Meeting of the Congregation on Sunday, December 4th, at 9:45 a.m. The purpose of the meeting is to elect new Council members and to receive a presentation from the Finance committee of the proposed 2023 budget. No other business may properly come before the congregation at this meeting.



Advent Parish Night — December 4th

Join Zion friends of all ages at the CEB at 4 p.m. on Sunday, December 4th for Advent family fun sponsored by the Parish Life committee. We will enjoy crafts, games, caroling, and a potluck supper. Please sign up via the link emailed from the Parish Office to indicate how many family members will attend and what you will bring for the potluck. Please contact Shellie Evers at 804-678-8993 with any questions you may have.

Women of Zion Cookie Exchange — December 13th

It's time again for our annual Cookie Exchange! Join us at the CEB on Tuesday, December 13th at 7 p.m. All you need to do is bring three dozen cookies to exchange, some of which we'll eat while we socialize. We'll also create packages to give to those who are homebound. This is also a time to draw a new prayer partner or choose to continue with your current one. The Cookie Exchange is always a lovely way to begin the Christmas holidays and to end the year. And guests are more than welcome. You can sign up via the link that was emailed from the Parish Office, or on the sign-up sheet in the narthex. For more information, please contact Anita Zarate at 908-938-4532.

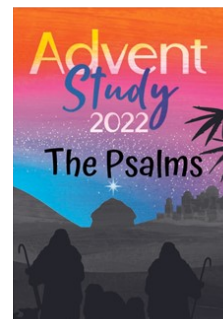


Tewksbury Tree & Menorah Lighting — December 11th

Between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m. on the morning of December 10th, members of the Parish Life committee will be placing luminaries along 517 through Oldwick for the Tewksbury Tree and Menorah Lighting which will occur from 4PM – 6PM on Sunday, December 11th. Please contact Shellie Evers if you would like to assist and stay tuned for more details about this special event!

Advent Midweek Gathering — Studying the Psalms

Join Pastor Kat on Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. through the season of Advent (November 30, December 7, 14, and 21) for a time of devotion centered on the Psalms. We will meet at the CEB in the Great Room. In the Psalms, we hear the prayers of God's people in varying circumstances and see our own struggles and joys reflected in the voices of scripture. Embrace this season of yearning and hope by setting aside an hour to meditate on this meaningful book from scripture.



Lunch Bunch — December 8th

Join Pastor Kat for Lunch Bunch on Thursday, December 8th, at 12 p.m. This month's gathering will take place at Spain 92. Please sign up via the link emailed from the Parish Office.

Thank You from the Social Ministry and Shepherding Committees



Thank you to everyone who donated to the Coat Drive this year. Zion collected over 121 new and used coats. Special thanks to Debra Kaufman and Helen Livingston, who packed up the coats and drove them to the main collection center, where they will be distributed to the men, women, and children in need of a warm coat this winter.



"Never was so much owed by so many to so few." – Winston Churchill



Zion's 2022 Military Recognition culminated on November 6th with Pastor Kat recognizing Zion's eleven veterans and blessing the eight care package boxes to be mailed to those currently serving. The care packages were mailed to VA, PA, NC, and overseas. In each of the packages were gift cards, a t-shirt, a hydro flask (water bottle), candy, snacks, and notes from the youth. Each box is valued at approximately \$100. Thank you to Jenny Gelson & Pastor Kat for their ongoing support of the project. Thank you to Betty Lanka and Helen Livingston for applying for the Thrivent grant, which enabled us to purchase the hydro flasks. And thank you to



the very generous congregants who donated money to be used toward the project, gift cards, snacks, and/or candy for the boxes: Helen & Jeff Livingston, Betty Lanka, Meghan & Jon Holman, Janet & Bob Herman, Sue & John Swanson, Bonnie & Frank Stanski, Sonya & Tom Fesenmaier, Debra Kaufman, Bill & Eleanor Kover, Denise & Peter Melick, Barb & Steve Surhoff, and Kelli & Bill Wallace.

Faith Kitchen News by Debra Kaufman

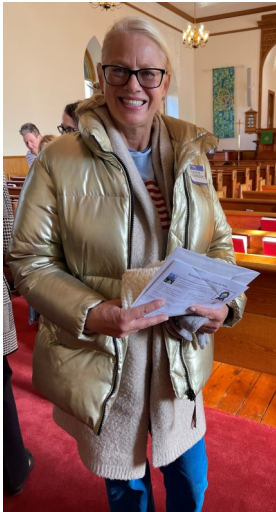


Two days of Thanksgiving at Faith Kitchen! New volunteers and faithful volunteers served up delicious meals for the Faith Kitchen patrons. New volunteers are always welcome. December opportunities are on Thursday the 1st and Saturday the 17th. We meet at 9AM at Faith Kitchen in Dover. Please contact Debra Kaufman if you would like to be a part of this ministry to our neighbors in need.



Zion Welcomes New Members

At the 11 a.m. service on Sunday, November 20th, seven new members joined our congregation, followed by a reception in the church narthex. Please join us in welcoming Melanie Bychkowski, Josh & Kelly Clark, Allyson Janssen, Sara Reilly, and Todd & Michele Stevens to the Zion family!



Notes from Zion's Financial Secretary

Contribution Statements via email:

Members can now elect to have their quarterly/annual contribution statements sent via email. You must agree to receive statements electronically and provide the email address that you would like to have them sent to. Our Parish Administrator will be sending out information and instructions on how to sign up for this option. This will not be done automatically. Look for additional information from the Parish Office and, if interested, please respond before the end of the year. If you do not ask for electronic statements, they will continue to be printed. These will be mailed before the end of January.



Additional Vanco/Simply Giving Options:

Three additional options are now available for those giving electronically using Vanco. They are:

1. Twice a month (1st and 15th)
2. Quarterly gifts process every three months after the start date.
3. Annual gifts process every year to the date after its start date.

If you already use Vanco and would like to take advantage of one of these new options, log into your account and follow the steps below. Alternatively, you may contact John Rustwick at jrustwick@gmail.com.

- * Under Transactions, click on the Edit button.
- * Under Frequency, click on the dropdown arrow.
- * Select the option you want (there are now 6)
- * Save the changes

If you do not currently use Vanco, but would like to begin, you can get started at: <https://secure.myvanco.com/YJ5M/home>

Offering Envelopes:

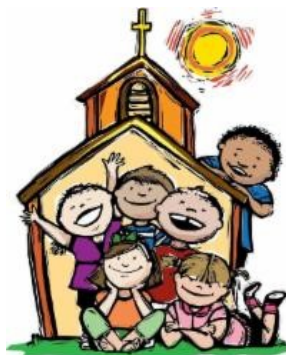
Boxes of 2023 offering envelopes have arrived. Those who did not pick up their envelopes in 2022 will not be assigned a box for next year. Those who DO receive a box may have a different number than this year. Boxes will be available for pick-up at the church in December and January. If you do not receive one and would like to have one, please contact Financial Secretary, John Rustwick, at 908-638-6339 or jrustwick@gmail.com.

Stewardship Campaign Update

Our 2023 Stewardship Campaign "**Blessing Future Generations**" continues. Thus far, 41 families have pledged over \$249,000. To those who have made their commitment, thank you! To those who have not yet pledged, there is still time. Our congregation is passionate about the new ministries we want to initiate and those we continue to support. As outlined by the Stewardship committee this fall, there is a need to have sufficient funds in our budget to hire a new Director of Youth & Family Ministries in 2023. To make your commitment, please drop your pledge card in the offering plate on Sunday morning, mail it to the Parish Office, or indicate your pledge by contacting Zion's Financial Secretary, John Rustwick, at jrustwick@gmail.com.



STEWARDSHIP



FINANCIAL SUMMARY - YTD 2022

GENERAL FUND	INCOME	EXPENSE	DIFFERENCE
January	\$31,968.90	-\$29,412.46	\$2,556.44
February	\$33,165.17	-\$31,893.59	\$1,271.58
March	\$29,721.39	-\$38,082.06	-\$8,360.67
April	\$28,907.80	-\$31,765.47	-\$2,857.67
May	\$30,337.81	-\$37,690.59	-\$7,352.78
June	\$36,476.35	-\$25,121.17	\$11,355.18
July	\$30,385.26	-\$24,339.35	\$6,045.91
August	\$20,041.19	-\$28,712.24	-\$8,671.05
September	\$21,300.48	-\$22,943.33	-\$1,642.85
October	\$27,938.20	-\$29,796.40	-\$1,858.20
Year To Date Total	\$290,242.55	-\$299,756.66	-\$9,514.11

TD BANK FUNDS	BALANCE	
Checking Account	\$88,878.24	11/3/2022
Money Market Plus	178,153.53	10/31/2022
Cash On Hand	\$267,031.77	
Directed Funds	\$153,867.98	10/31/2022
Operating Funds	\$113,163.79	10/31/2022
Cash On Hand	\$267,031.77	

ENDOWMENT FUNDS	BALANCE	
CFNJ	\$476,316.67	10/31/2022
THRIVENT	\$322,109.97	10/31/2022
TOTAL	\$798,426.64	

ENDOWMENT MISSION OUTREACH

Available Funds for 2022	\$25,148.00
Synod Compensation Aid Fund	-\$1,500.00
Lutheran Disaster Response - Ukraine	-\$5,000.00
NJ Synod Faithful Journey	-\$500.00
Good News Home for Women	-\$1,388.00
2022 Endowment Funds Remaining	\$16,760.00



Give to Zion from your phone! Scan the QR code to be directed to Tithely's electronic giving site.

A Little Giggle from the Shepherding Committee

