



Good News from Zion

Connecting People with God's Grace

December 2023

A Message from Pastor Kat

Heads Up!

"Heads up!" is a phrase certain to catch your attention and put all your senses on alert. Often, these words precede something being thrown your way – a ball if you're lucky! In my childhood home, these words rang out whenever someone was about to throw something down the stairs: "Heads up!" It's a phrase to go alongside "Watch out!" or "Look Alive!"

During Advent, we are told to "Keep Awake!" This familiar phrase is meant to catch our attention in the same way as "Heads Up!" God's presence is coming our way, and the words of scripture urge us to sharpen our senses for the big moment.

The Big Moment

In this season, we ponder how God will come to us at the very end to make all things right, and we also anticipate God coming to us in the form of a baby to show us his love. These events are big moments in history when God shows up in the world in unexpected yet transformational ways.

At the same time, we know that God is with us in every moment – no matter how big or small. These glimpses of God's presence in the everyday are what we open our eyes, ears, and hearts to receive in this time of preparation and anticipation.

So – "Heads Up!" God's love is surely coming your way this Advent.

In Christ,
Pastor Kat

ADVENT & CHRISTMAS AT ZION

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| Dec 6, 13, 20,
6:30 p.m. | Wednesdays in Advent
Midweek Gathering with Pastor Kat
"Be Not Afraid" (CEB) |
| December 3
8:30 & 11 a.m.
9:45 a.m.
9:45 a.m.
6:30 p.m. | First Sunday of Advent
Communion Worship Service
Sunday School & Confirmation Class
Special Meeting of the Congregation
(Church)
Advent Parish Night (CEB) |
| December 10
8:30 & 11 a.m.
9:45 a.m. | Second Sunday of Advent
Communion Worship Service
Sunday School & Confirmation Class |
| December 17
10 a.m. | Third Sunday of Advent
<u>Single Service</u> featuring the
Sunday School Christmas Program |
| December 24
10 a.m.
5 p.m.
8 p.m. | Fourth Sunday of Advent and
Christmas Eve
Communion Worship Service

Candlelight Communion Worship
(Bell Choir)
Candlelight Communion Worship
(Parish Choir) |



Church Council Highlights

The Church Council met via Zoom conference call on November 16th. Below are the highlights of that meeting.



- A Special Meeting of the Congregation will be held on December 3rd at 9:45 a.m. at the church. The purpose of the meeting is to elect 2024 council members and to receive a presentation of the proposed 2024 budget.
- Rick Schroeder reported that there will be \$25,850 in Endowment Fund earnings available for mission outreach in 2024.
- The council reviewed and discussed the proposed 2024 budget provided by the Finance committee.
- John & Wendy Minerowicz have volunteered to chair the Evangelism committee in 2024.
- Upon the conclusion of the “A Year of Growing in Faith” adult confirmation program, five adults will be confirming their faith at the 10 a.m. worship service on December 24th.
- A Sunday School class for 9th-12th graders, High School Connect, has begun meeting with Jaime on Sundays at 9:45 a.m.
- The Property committee has received bids from only one of the many companies who were contacted. Information about all bids received will be shared with the congregation at the Annual Meeting on January 28th.
- The alarm system at the CEB needs to be replaced. The Property committee is researching the best option.
- The Thanksgiving Adopt-a-Family initiative concluded with enough donations received to provide 28 meals to clients of the Harvest Family Success Center. Council voted to use \$1,650 in Endowment Fund earnings to enable us to donate 50 meals.
- Six care packages were mailed to active duty military members this month.
- The Nominating committee is seeking four people to join council in 2024.
- Thank you to:
 - * Ken Bryson & Jaime VanNostrand for coordinating the youth-led worship service.
 - * Joanne Rupp for setting up the All Saints Day worship service.
 - * Gerry Dehkes, Melanie Hodges, Sandy Matsen, Joanne Rupp, and Cindy Rupprecht for their leadership of the all-school All Saints event.
 - * John McAleer for his continued work on the CEB alarm system.
 - * Jim Dierking, Frank Stanski, and Harold Wrede for their work on the church exterior.
 - * Helen Livingston for chairing the Adopt-a-Family project.
 - * Shellie Evers and Cindy Rupprecht for packing the military care packages.



Jim Dierking & Frank Stanski at work

The next meeting of the Church Council is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Thursday, December 21st. Meetings are open for all to attend. If you would like to join an upcoming meeting, please let the Parish Office know and we will send you the Zoom link.



Special Meeting of the Congregation and Advent Parish Night

Sunday, December 3rd

On Sunday, December 3rd, there will be a **Special Meeting of the Congregation** at 9:45 a.m. at the church. The purpose of the meeting is to elect 2024 council members and to receive a presentation of the proposed 2024 budget. At 6:30 p.m. we will gather at the CEB for **Advent Parish Night**. We'll enjoy crafts, caroling, and a bonfire with s'mores and hot chocolate!



Youth and Family Ministry at Zion

Confirmation/Youth Sunday

On Sunday, October 29, four of our young people stood before a crowded sanctuary, confirmed their faith, and became adult members of the church. Congratulations to Chloe, Maisie, Lauren, and Chase! And thank you to Pastor Kat and to Jeff Livingston for preparing them to take this formative step in their faith journeys.

Another big thank you to more than a dozen other young people, ranging in age from 5 to 15, for leading almost all aspects of that special worship service! What a joy to see our youngest leaders doing everything from greeting to reading to ringing the bell!

All Saints Day

On Sunday, November 5, Sunday Schoolers, confirmation students, and high schoolers came together for an All Saints themed



All-School Event during which we honored and celebrated the saints of Zion's history - from both our distant past and our living memory. Each student collected stamps on their All Saints Passport as they traveled from station to station learning about Louise Brokaw, Peter Muhlenberg, Baltus Pickel, and Ernest Stelle. We had a great time learning about the people who made Zion what it is today!

Special thanks to volunteers Gerry Dehkes, Melanie Hodges, Sandy Matsen, Joanne Rupp, and Cindy Rupprecht for leading our Saint Stations!



Youth Hike

On Sunday, November 11th, after sharing a pizza lunch together at the CEB, a group of Zion youth, parents, and mentors headed out to the Columbia Trail for a beautiful fall hike! The path was filled with fairy houses, rock art, and wildlife. It was a wonderful afternoon of fun and fellowship!





The Giving Tree

Giving Tree gift tags are available at the church and at the CEB. Please deliver your gift, placed in a gift bag with the tag attached, no later than Sunday, December 3rd.

Alternative Giving

It is hard to believe that Christmas is just around the corner! Time to start thinking about all those hard to shop for people on your Christmas list. How many times do they tell you “I don’t need anything for Christmas”? This year, why not donate to a charity they might find meaningful! 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 small ornament/gift that represents the charity, which you can give to that special person on your list. Gifts are available for purchase at the CEB and at the church. Here are the four charities for 2023:



\$5 – Marty’s Place Senior Dog Sanctuary



Imagine the relief and gratitude people feel when placing their senior dogs at Marty’s Place Senior Dog Sanctuary. Due to their own relocation, or medical/financial troubles, they made the heart-breaking decision that they could no longer care for their dogs. They now have the peace of mind knowing that their dogs will have a lifetime of loving care, companionship with staff and other dogs, and engage in enriching activities in a specially designed facility. Visit their website to view

an endearing video about the dogs’ daily routines. For more information, visit www.martysplace.org.

\$10– Pedals for Progress

A man in Rwanda transforms a bicycle into a taxi. Another man in Guatemala transforms his into a produce truck. A third man in Togo uses his as a mobile bike medic. In addition to using a bicycle for basic transportation, there are many ways new or refurbished bicycles can be put to good use thanks to Pedals for Progress, which has been operating since 1991. Nonprofit partner organizations in these and other countries train children and adults in bicycle repair and maintenance and are provided with the necessary parts, tools, lubricants, and accessories. Pedals for Progress also sends sewing machines to developing countries, as in 2022, when receiving countries were Cameroon, Somalia, and Uganda. For more information, visit www.p4p.org.



\$15- Prison Fellowship Angel Tree



The Prison Fellowship Angel Tree program recognizes the importance of strengthening and maintaining the bond between an incarcerated parent and their children. This is one of the vital, Christ centered nationwide programs offered to prisoners and their families by the

Prison Fellowship Ministries, founded in 1976 by Charles Colson. Through partnership with churches, groups, and other organizations, the Angel Tree programs strive to enhance this bond. The Angel Tree enables churches and other groups to purchase gifts and include a personal message of love on behalf of the parents. Angel Tree Camping provides scholarships for children, partnering with churches, to attend Christ centered camps. The Angel Tree Sports Camp sponsors day camps in a variety of sports. The Angel Tree Everyday encourages congregations to integrate the Angel Tree families into their churches’ year-round programs. For more information, visit www.prisonfellowship.org.

\$20- ELCA Good Gifts – School Fees & Uniforms for Girls

The ELCA hopes to make a difference in the lives of girls whose educational opportunities are impacted by poverty. Worldwide, struggling families find the associated costs of educating children, paying school fees and buying uniforms, a burden. Often, their sons whose earning potential is thought to be greater may be chosen over their daughters to continue their education. The daughters from these impoverished families who drop out of school are more likely to be forced into child labor, marry at a young age and become pregnant with complications, be victims of domestic violence, and suffer with malnourishment. The future for girls who remain in school is brighter with employment opportunities, with health, safety, and prosperity for their families, and an ability to contribute to the welfare of their community. For more information, visit www.ELCA.org/goodgifts.





Lunch Bunch — December 14th

Join friends from Zion for the return of Lunch Bunch at 12 p.m. on Thursday, December 14th, at Spain 92 on route 202 in Raritan. Please contact the Parish Office to reserve your place at the table!



Women of Zion Cookie Exchange

It's time again for our annual Cookie Exchange! Join us at the CEB on Tuesday, December 12th 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.

Faith Kitchen Update

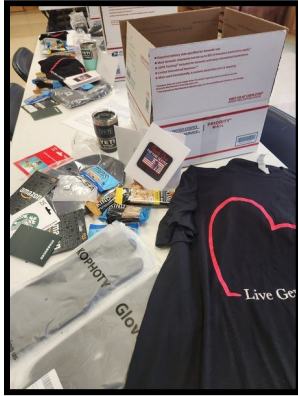
Another rewarding morning for Zion's Faith Kitchen volunteers! A delicious lunch of ham and vegetable chowder, cornbread, salad and bananas. Thank you John McAleer for leading us! Thanks to Christine Clark, John & Audrey Ruland, Michele & Todd Stevens, John & Wendy Minerowicz, and Barb & Steve Surhoff. A hundred meals were served.



Military Recognition Recap

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

The 2023 military recognition culminated on November 12th with Pastor Kat recognizing the ten Zion veterans and blessing the six boxes to be mailed to those currently serving. The care packages were mailed to Maryland, North Carolina, Virginia, and Germany. Each of the packages contained an LED Beanie, gloves that you can still use your phone while wearing (I know, right?!), a Yeti cup, gift cards, a t-shirt (or 2), candy, and cards from Pastor Kat and our youth.



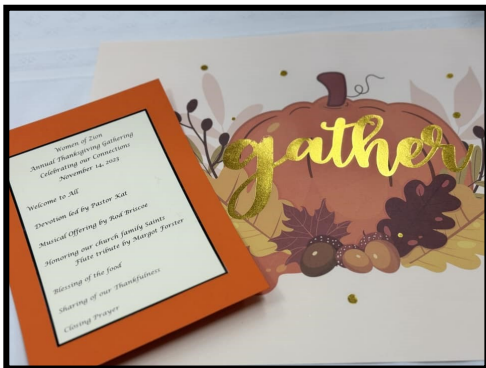
Each box is valued at approximately \$180. Thank you to Jenny Gelson & Pastor Kat for their ongoing support of the project, and to Betty Lanka and Helen Livingston for applying for the Thrivent grant. Special thanks to the very generous congregants who donated money and gift cards to be used toward the project.

From Memorial Day to Veterans Day, we expressed our gratitude to ten Zion veterans and six active-duty service members in our newsletters and in Zion's Friends and Family Facebook group.



Women of Zion Thanksgiving Dinner

The Women of Zion met on November 14th for the annual Thanksgiving Dinner Celebration — another special gathering of these women. Pastor Kat led a meaningful devotion, Rod provided a "virtual" song and Margot performed a jazz rendition of Amazing Grace to celebrate our saints. Always a special time gathered to celebrate our connections and our thanksgivings for the year past.



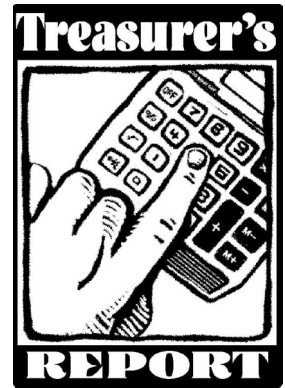
FINANCIAL SUMMARY - YTD 2023

GENERAL FUND	INCOME	EXPENSE	DIFFERENCE
January	\$26,594.04	-\$26,150.29	\$443.75
February	\$35,166.23	-\$29,485.32	\$5,680.91
March	\$36,556.41	-\$29,869.57	\$6,686.84
April	\$33,910.13	-\$29,324.04	\$4,586.09
May	\$25,292.29	-\$28,576.13	-\$3,283.84
June	\$23,501.85	-\$23,937.96	-\$436.11
July	\$30,808.96	-\$32,992.29	-\$2,183.33
August	\$27,563.54	-\$36,428.12	-\$8,864.58
September	\$25,894.08	-\$28,629.79	-\$2,735.71
October	\$31,473.12	-\$35,328.78	-\$3,855.66
Year To Date Total	\$296,760.65	-\$300,722.29	-\$3,961.64

TD BANK FUNDS	BALANCE	
Checking Account	\$66,796.68	11/3/2023
Money Market Plus	\$228,271.39	10/31/2023
Cash On Hand	\$295,068.07	
Directed Funds	\$181,070.82	10/31/2023
Operating Funds	\$113,997.25	10/31/2023
Cash On Hand	\$295,068.07	

ENDOWMENT FUNDS	BALANCE	
CFNJ	\$513,924.95	8/31/2023
THRIVENT	\$358,924.85	9/30/2023
TOTAL	\$872,849.80	

ENDOWMENT MISSION OUTREACH	
Available Funds for 2023	\$25,282.00
Synod Compensation Aid Fund	-\$1,500.00
Lutheran Disaster Response	-\$5,000.00
Prison Prayer Books	-\$396.77
ELCA Good Gifts (LGBTQ youth)	-\$325.00
Family Promise	-\$3,090.00
Good News Home for Women	-\$1,600.00
Box build (Samaritan's Purse)	-\$2,000.00
2023 Endowment Funds Remaining	\$11,370.23



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

