



Good News from Zion

Connecting People with God's Grace

March 2024

A Message from Pastor Kat

It's A Promise

This Lenten season, we hear lessons from scripture about the covenants, or promises, that God makes to God's people – to Noah, to Abraham, to God's people in the wilderness, to God's people in exile. In each instance, God pledges to be in relationship with God's people and to make a new way for God's people.

In Jesus, we see God's promise fulfilled in the flesh. Through Jesus, God draws us even closer and shows us once more how to live abundantly and with grace. As Lent draws to a close at the end of this month, we will walk a sacred journey alongside Jesus and the disciples during Holy Week. During this week, the services and readings from scripture invite us to join the crowds of people who first welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem, the holy city, with the words, "Hosanna! Save us!" and later condemned him with the words, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

During Holy Week, we relive the final days of Jesus and hear how he stays true to his mission and fulfills the promise of choosing love for us, God's people, and for all of creation.

An Easter Miracle

Holy Week ends with a celebration of a mysterious and wondrous miracle: Jesus' death on the cross is not the end of the road. The empty tomb revealed on Easter Sunday tells a story of new life, not death, and shows us how God once more paves a new way for God's people: a way of eternal life.

Perhaps you are struggling to feel God's love or to see the path forward in your own life. Wherever you might find yourself this Lent, know that God's promise rings true for you even now: God is with you, and God will make a way.

In Christ,
Pastor Kat

HOLY WEEK WORSHIP SCHEDULE

Palm Sunday — March 24th

Single Service at 10 a.m.

No Sunday School

Maundy Thursday – March 28th

Communion Worship at 7 p.m.

Good Friday – March 29th

Tenebrae Service at 7 p.m.

Saturday – March 30th

Easter Egg Hunt at 10 a.m.

Easter Sunday – March 31st

Worship at 8:30 a.m. and 11:00 a.m.

No Sunday School

Church Council Highlights

The Church Council met via Zoom conference call on February 15th. Below are the highlights of that meeting.



- Stewardship chair Tom Held made a presentation to the council highlighting 2023 giving trends and 2024 projections.
- Candlelight Meditation sessions at the church will take the place of a Midweek Lenten Gathering this year. The Evangelism committee will be providing Zion materials for any visitors who attend.
- The Social Ministry committee will be bringing back the Feed My Starving Children MobilePack on May 31st—June 1st.
- Council members noted that the February 10th Council Retreat was especially helpful in focusing on goals for 2024.
- Jaime VanNostrand shared highlights from her January trip to New Orleans for the ELCA Youth Ministry Network's annual conference, and thanked the council for supporting her opportunity to attend.
- The Parish Life committee is planning three events for March — Parents Night Out on 3/8, The Big Fuss at Sunken Silo Brew Works on 3/23, and the Stations of the Cross at St. John Neumann on 3/29 (followed by Women of Zion luncheon).
- Helen Livingston joined the meeting to present the council with a proposal for the construction of the second means of egress at the church. Despite Helen's diligent work in contacting at least a dozen contractors over the last year, with the goal of gathering three estimates, this company is the only one who has submitted a bid. As such, Helen asked the council to approve the estimate, and discussion was held around the suitability of this contractor. Helen was asked to obtain two reviews of their recent works, to ensure previous customers had a good experience. Helen will report back to council at the March 14th meeting.
- Zion's Congregational Policies Manual has not been updated since 2014, and a review of all policies is overdue. Council will be working in the coming months to look at all existing policies for potential changes and updating.
- Colin Brokaw reported that a new video is being made for Zion's website. Please see the article below.
- Thank you to:
 - * Pastor Kat for her leadership of the 2024 Council Retreat.
 - * Brooke Schumann for hosting the council's evening social the night before the retreat.
 - * Jeff Livingston and Cindy Rupprecht for assisting with worship and confirmation class while Pastor Kat was sick.

The next meeting of the Church Council is scheduled for 7 p.m. on Thursday, March 21st on Zoom. 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.



Lights, Camera, Action! A New Video for Zion's Website

Some of you may remember that for Zion's 300th anniversary in 2014 we had a video featured on the home page of our website showing Pastor Summer, Pastor Selover, some cool drone shots of the church, and lots of members smiling and worshipping. The babies in that video are in high school now and we've got a new pastor, so it's time for us to shoot a new video.

Our friend who put together the 2014 video, videographer Bill Ivie, will be coming to worship at our 10 a.m. single service on Palm Sunday, March 24th. Please come to pack the pews and wear your best smile! If you are not comfortable being shown in the video, please let Colin Brokaw know and we'll leave you out of the final product. The new video will greet visitors to our website and show what a vibrant and welcoming community we have at Zion.



Youth and Family Ministry at Zion

by Jaime VanNostrand

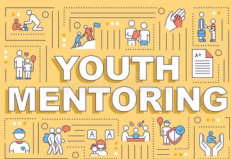
It's a busy time at Zion for Youth and Family Ministry!

Sunday School has continued to meet each week in February with February 11th serving as an All School Event for students of all ages. The kids learned about the preparation of the ashes for the Ash Wednesday service and even got to participate in the process!

There will be another All School Event on Sunday, March 17th, when we will hold our annual Egg-Stravaganza! Hard boiled eggs will be dyed and prepared to be shared with the folks at the Open Cupboard Food Pantry, and plastic ones will be stuffed for the Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, March 30th. Be sure to mark both dates on your calendar!



A group of 20 of us gathered on February 25th for an afternoon of food, fun, fellowship, and bowling! Kids and their families, teens and their friends, youth and their mentors - all came together for this exciting event!



Speaking of mentors, the matching process for our new 2024 mentor/mentee pairs is already well under way! Four seventh graders will soon be connected with adults who will encourage them in their faith journey, be a source of connection and support, and just generally take an interest in their lives. Keep an eye out for these new pairs once folks have been matched later this month!



Community Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, March 30th at 10 a.m. at the CEB

Join us for crafts, games, treats, and pictures with the Easter Bunny!

Don't forget to bring your basket for the Egg Hunt!

Social Ministry News

Please mark your calendar for these upcoming events.



Annual Town Wide Tag Sale — Saturday, April 20th (Rain Date is April 27th)

Please watch your email for a link to volunteer with sorting and pricing items, and working on the day of the sale. Donations may be dropped off at the CEB beginning April 1st.



Feed My Starving Children — Friday, May 31st & Saturday, June 1st

Join friends from Zion and the surrounding community for a Feed My Starving Children MobilePack. Turn hunger into hope with your own two hands by packing nutritious meals for hungry children around the world. Details will be provided in the coming month.

Faith Kitchen Update

Another day serving hungry souls at Faith Kitchen, led by Soup-meister John McAleer. Volunteers Christine Clark, John Minerowicz, Todd & Michelle Stevens, Sue Swanson, and Cathy Winter served 80 plates & 46 take-home meals with many eager second helpings of soup. A hearty meal of a heavy & spicy chicken taco soup (two 40 qt. pots!), corn bread, salad & bananas is a client favorite!





Lunch Bunch — March 14th

Join friends from Zion for Lunch Bunch at 12 p.m. on Thursday, March 14th, at Bensi in Whitehouse Station. Please contact the Parish Office to reserve your place at the table!

Evangelism Committee News

EVANGELISM



Our first **Candlelight Meditation** session took place on February 20th with 24 attendees, half of whom were non-members. The first session was well-received, and as word spreads we are hoping for even more attendees.



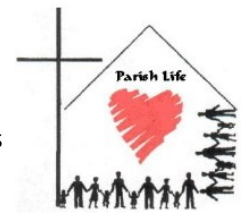
Planning for the March 30th **Easter Egg Hunt** is well underway. The event will include crafts, snacks, pictures with the Easter Bunny and the Easter Egg Hunt on the back lawn of the CEB. If anyone is available to help with this fun community event, please contact Donna Reilly or John Minerowicz. The festivities begin at 10:00 a.m.

Parish Life Happenings

In March we are bringing back two popular events, and we're going line dancing again! Please join us.



Friday, March 8th: **Parents Night Out** is an opportunity for those with kids ages 3-11 to enjoy a well deserved evening off! There is no charge to drop the kids at the CEB for pizza, games, movie, and camaraderie. Older kids are welcome to come help. We will be there from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. Please sign up via the link that was emailed from the Parish Office.



Saturday, March 23rd: Bring your friends to **Sunken Silo Brew Works** in Lebanon to enjoy our favorite cover band, **The Big Fuss** (Kathy and John Rustwick's son James is on guitar!) The band starts at 7 p.m., and we will gather at 6 p.m. so we can talk before the music kicks in! Please bring a snack to share, and \$10 for the cover charge.



Saturday, March 30th: We had such a fabulous time with **country line dancing** on February 17th, so we're going again! Beginner lessons are from 5 p.m. to 6 p.m., with open dancing from 6 p.m. to 10 p.m. The venue is the Brass Knob Tavern at Shoppes at the Farm on Route 22 in Whitehouse Station. There is a \$15 cover charge.

Upcoming Women Of Zion Events



Living Stations of the Cross — All are invited to the Living Stations of the Cross at St. John Neumann, 398 County Rd. 513, Califon, on Good Friday, March 29th, at 12:00 noon. Pastor Kat will again be part of the one-hour program, featuring the story of Jesus' passion. Please plan to arrive no later than 11:45 a.m.

Women
of
ZION

Afterwards, the Women of Zion will go to lunch at Max's Market & Eatery, 425 County Rd. 513, Califon. If you plan to attend the luncheon, please watch for the link to be emailed from the Parish Office. Please sign up by March 22nd so we can give Max's a timely headcount.



A Ballet Experience — Our second event of the new year is a beginner's ballet class on Friday, April 5th at 7 p.m., taught by our own Michele Stevens, who's a professional dance educator. Michele promises us a fun experience, so come give it a try! Girls ten years old and up are most welcome. This is another opportunity for mentors and mentees to enjoy each others' company. As always, friends are welcome too!

Since most of us don't have ballet slippers, socks with non-skid treads are fine. We do plan to order socks, so please sign up on the link that will be emailed from the Parish Office no later than March 20th so they arrive in time. Please wear comfortable clothes. Water bottles will be provided. You can call Michele if you have any questions (908-239-4966).

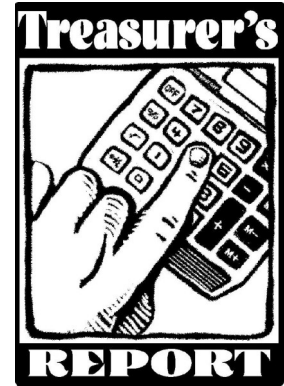
FINANCIAL SUMMARY - YTD 2024

GENERAL FUND	INCOME	EXPENSES	DIFFERENCE
January	\$22,666.52	-\$29,323.60	-\$6,657.08
Year To Date Total	\$22,666.52	-\$29,323.60	-\$6,657.08

TD BANK FUNDS	BALANCE	
Checking Account	\$108,701.30	2/3/2024
Money Market Plus	\$228,300.13	1/31/2024
Cash On Hand	\$337,001.43	
Directed Funds	\$223,687.09	1/31/2024
Operating Funds	\$113,314.34	1/31/2024
Cash On Hand	\$337,001.43	

ENDOWMENT FUNDS	BALANCE	
CFNJ	\$538,087.93	12/31/2023
THRIVENT	\$397,640.84	1/31/2024
TOTAL	\$935,728.77	

ENDOWMENT MISSION OUTREACH	
Available Funds for 2023	\$25,850.00
Synod Compensation Aid Fund	-\$1,500.00
2023 Endowment Funds Remaining	\$24,350.00



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

News from the Open Cupboard Food Pantry

A devastating fire on February 25th has destroyed the Open Cupboard Pantry and Thrift Shop in Clinton. Everything was lost. Open Cupboard is taking online donations through their website only (not via a GoFundMe). Support in the form of checks and Shop Rite gift cards can be mailed to P.O. Box 5071, Clinton, NJ 08809.



Open Cupboard's Washington location has gotten very busy in recent months with many new families registering. Thank you for your continued donations! Also, a special thank you to the Zion work team that came on February 22nd. They did a wonderful amount of organizing; the shelves have never looked better! If you would like to volunteer to assist with stocking shelves and organizing inventory at the Washington location on the fourth Thursday of each month, please sign up via the link emailed from the Parish Office.

Washington Pantry current needs:

Sweetened cereal	Canned oranges
Flavored oatmeal	Canned pineapple
Baked beans	Crackers
Canned ravioli	Crunchy peanut butter
Canned spaghetti	Body wash