



Good News from Zion

Connecting People with God's Grace

August 2025

A Message from Pastor Kat

A Great Cloud of Witnesses

In August, we will hear in worship from the book of Hebrews, a curious epistle of an unknown author that many hypothesize was a sermon of sorts for early Christians. The writer of this book sought to uplift and encourage the book's initial audience, who was experiencing doubts and hardships causing them to question their faith. Perhaps you can relate! Our own world can feel tumultuous with dire headlines in the news about extreme weather, political tensions, and economic instability. How easy to lose heart in such a context!

In a well-known passage of this book, the writer of Hebrews reminds us that we are not the first to face hard times and difficult obstacles. In this passage, the writer names an impressive list of forebears from scripture, "a great cloud of witnesses," whom God accompanied and empowered in hard times. We do well to recall that, just as God was with our biblical ancestors, God is with us today – even in the midst of uncertainty and calamity.

311 Years of Zion Lutheran Church

Every year in August, we celebrate our anniversary as a church. This August marks 311 years since the founding of the Zion congregation. It can be awe-inspiring to remember all our forebears at Zion have weathered before, during, and after the founding of our country. In hard times, they kept the faith just like those heroes in scripture. God was with them during the war of independence, civil war, two world wars, and much more besides. May their enduring faith in the future, inspire us to have hope.

This month, I pray we can rest in the assurance that God will be with us in whatever storms may befall us in the world or in our private lives. May we remember and be inspired by that "great cloud of witnesses" who preceded us in scripture and at Zion Lutheran Church.

In Christ,
Pastor Kat



Sunday School Rally Day — September 7th

Children, youth, and their families are invited to join us as we kick off the new program year with a Rally Day celebration! Come reconnect after a summer apart, learn more about the year ahead, and see how God is moving in Zion's youth and family ministry!

Church Council Highlights

The Church Council did not meet in July. Highlights from the August meeting will appear in the September newsletter.



Thank You from Open Cupboard Food Pantry

Open Cupboard humbly thanks Zion for the \$2,500 donation from Endowment Fund earnings. Those funds will go a long way in helping us get food back on the shelves. We also want to thank the VBS families for collecting over 120 lbs. in food donations and \$130 in monetary donations!

In addition to all of this, we have been receiving regular donations of food from members of the congregation. Your donations and monetary support help feed hundreds of grateful individuals and families in our community.



Current pantry items needed: beef broth, chicken broth, canned mixed vegetables, canned tomatoes, canned chicken noodle soup, cans or cups of fruit cocktail, sweetened cereal, jarred tomato sauce, laundry detergent.

Faith Kitchen Update

July 3rd's menu at Faith Kitchen was a tasty and filling summer lunch of meatball hoagies, potato salad, green salad, banana, and Italian ice. We served 50 takeouts and 60 plates of food. The preparations went smoothly with John McAleer at the helm and Tom & Rita Groendyke, Chris Clark, and Steve & Barb Surhoff on the team. We had a chance to take a break and enjoy each other's company and to greatly enjoy Jann McAleer's delicious cinnamon sour cream coffee cake. Thank you, Jann!



The Saturday crew of John McAleer, Cindy Rupprecht, Tom & Rita Groendyke, Sue Swanson, and Ken & Liz Degen fed the hungry souls on July 19th. A hearty summer meal of meatball hoagies, potato salad, green salad & bananas was well received. We served 60 plates and 50 takeaways.





Youth & Family Ministry at Zion

by Jaime VanNostrand

With much of our Youth & Family programming on hiatus until the fall, we would like to offer Zion's families a few Faith at Home practices this summer! We hope that these practices support you and your children as you continue to grow in faith during these summer months. This month, we invite you to consider the following practice as outlined in Traci Smith's *Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home*.

Prayer Walk -- Designed for Ages 5+

When I ask adults in my congregation when they feel the presence of God most clearly, I often hear things such as "while hiking," or "when the sun sets," or "in nature." So often when we consider the wonders of God, we see evidence of God's creative power in snowfall, or rain, or wind. This prayer practice involves walking in nature and noticing the marvels of God's creation.

Materials (All of these materials are optional.)

1. Paper bag, basket, or other container for collecting interesting things
2. Magnifying glass
3. Binoculars
4. Camera
5. Sketch pad and pencil or crayons
6. Any materials that you need on a hike (sunscreen, bug spray, sunglasses, lunch, etc.)



How To

1. Pick a day and location appropriate for a walk or hike outside.
2. Prepare for your walk and take with you items that are relevant for your context and weather conditions.
3. Introduce the idea of a prayer walk to your family by saying, "We are going to go for a walk now to think about all of the special ways that we can see the work of God in the world around us."
4. Choose a way your family might decide to identify how you see God on your walk. Some options:
 - a. Collect items along the way that seem meaningful and put them in a bag or basket (if appropriate; many parks and nature reserves don't allow the removal of any living things, so only take things such as leaves already lying on the ground, etc.).
 - b. Encourage everyone to take photos of places where there is evidence of God's work.
 - c. Draw sketches.
 - d. Write poems.
5. After the walk, gather together to share what you have learned by sharing your photos, drawings, and/or paintings.

Notes

- Consider doing this prayer walk, not only on a sunny or pleasant day, but also on days that are rainy, "too hot," "too cold," or otherwise not ideal. These imperfect days offer a rich opportunity to see evidence of God's work in ways that might not be apparent on other days.
- This activity will vary greatly depending on the interests and activities of family members. Consider allowing each family member to pick out the ways that he or she sees God's work. One person might photograph, while another collects things, and yet another sketches.

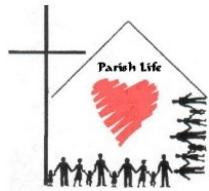
Variations

- Do this prayer walk inside at a unique location: a mall, church, etc. Take the same walk and travel the same route over a period of time (one time per month for a year, for example), and compare how observations change over time.
- Travel to a special location for the purpose of this practice. Try different national parks, or local parks and trails.

News from Parish Life



All are invited to meet at Little Ridge Vineyards in Phillipsburg at 1 PM on Saturday, August 9th. Bring a snack to share as we sample wine and relax for a few hours. If you're not a wine drinker, you may bring soft drinks or water (no outside alcohol). Please bring a friend — the more the merrier!



The next crochet class is planned for Thursday August 7th, **3:30 to 5:00** at the CEB. Please note the earlier time! We had fun at our July meeting. All ages and all abilities are welcome, and we have extra yarn and hooks.

Participants can come to learn how to crochet or to learn about making prayer squares. You are also welcome to bring a project you are working on, whether it be crocheting, knitting, or cross stitch, etc., and enjoy the fellowship. Hope you can join us!



Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch will not meet in August. See you on September 11th!

Soles4Souls Shoe Collection

Beginning in September, the Social Ministry committee will be collecting shoes to be donated to Soles4Souls. All styles and sizes of new or gently-worn shoes can be dropped off at the church or CEB any time between September 15th and October 31st. For more information about Soles4Souls, please visit www.soles4souls.org.



5K Fun Run/Walk — September 6th

Mark your calendar for Zion's 6th annual 5K Fun Run/Walk on Saturday, September 6th, starting at 10:00 a.m. The suggested entrance fee for this event is \$20, with all proceeds benefiting the Good News Home for Women in Flemington.

The race will start at the CEB parking lot and will wind its way through scenic Oldwick. If 5K (3.1 miles) seems like too much for you, the first part of the course circles back to the CEB after less than a mile before heading out through farmlands. Snacks and drinks will be provided before and after the event. If joining the Run/Walk isn't for you, please stay tuned to your email to learn more about a variety of volunteer opportunities that are available. Last year we had 77 participants. With your help, we can break 100. We hope to see you at this fun family event on September 6th!

Look for a sign up genius soon with more information on opportunities to help out with this event.



Women of Zion Thanksgiving Dinner

Please save the date for the Women of Zion Thanksgiving Dinner celebration on Wednesday, November 12th at 6:30 p.m. at the CEB. Please stay tuned for details!