



Good News from Zion

Connecting People with God's Grace

May 2026

A Message from Pastor Kat

A Season of Resurrection

Easter Sunday, otherwise known as Resurrection of Our Lord, is just the beginning of a whole season in which we celebrate and ponder the resurrection. The Easter season is, in fact, one of the longest of the church year. God's triumph over death through Jesus Christ is a mystery we take eight weeks to ponder.

The first disciples and witnesses to the resurrection also needed time to absorb Jesus being raised from the dead. The stories of the resurrected Christ encountering his disciples reveal just how overwhelming this experience was. Mary Magdalene clutches Jesus' feet in worship. Cleopas and his traveling partner run seven miles back to Jerusalem to share their experience of Jesus breaking the bread. Peter jumps naked into a lake and swims to the shore to greet Jesus. To be in the presence of the risen Christ is to be overwhelmed with emotion: full of joy and wonder, fear and awe.

Can it possibly be?

These stories from scripture about the risen Christ are meant to stir up faith and hope in us that what God accomplishes in Christ's victory over death is real, felt, tangible, impactful. What had seemed like shame and defeat on the cross turns out to be glory and victory in the empty tomb. It can take a bit for this sudden reversal, this news that seems too good to be true, to really sink in.

So, this Easter season, I pray that, in the water and the Word, in the bread and the wine, you come to experience the reality that Jesus Christ truly died and was truly raised for your benefit. We need no longer have any fear of death, for, in Christ, God has triumphed over the grave. Alleluia! He is risen!

In Christ,
Pastor Kat

Join us for a Celebration Brunch

in Honor of the May 2nd Wedding of

Pastor Kat Steinly and Rev. Levi Powers

Sunday, May 31, 2026

10:30 a.m.

RSVP via the link emailed from the Parish Office

Church Council Highlights



The Church Council met on April 16th. Highlights from that meeting are below.

- Four of Zion's young people received their First Communion on Palm Sunday. Two others will celebrate theirs on a future date.
- Upcoming events for youth & families include Camp Sunday on May 3rd, the Box Build for Operation Christmas Child on May 10th, and the end-of-year Sunday School celebration on May 17th, followed by the annual Miniature Golf outing.
- There were 51 children in attendance at the Easter Egg Hunt.
- The summer worship schedule begins on May 24th, with a single service at 9:30 a.m.
- Council approved a new Funeral Policy.
- The two candidates for the Director of Music position completed panel interviews in April and will be auditioning in May.
- A training session for use of the AED units and choking hazard kits will be held in the coming months.
- Council continues to explore options for the best solution to the HVAC issues at the CEB.

Thank you to:

- * All those who contributed time and talents to the Holy Week and Easter services — Jaye Newbold, Sam Wilson, Tara, Brian & Alex Pepe, and members of the Parish Choir, Bell Choir, and Worship & Music committee.
- * Janet Hornich for serving as the director of the Bell Choir for two years.
- * Gerry Dehkes for narrating the Bell Choir piece on Palm Sunday.
- * Janet Hornich and John & Wendy Minerowicz for their many hours of preparation for the Easter Egg Hunt.
- * Michele Stevens for her Easter Bunny excellence. ★

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

Lunch Bunch

Zion's lively group of retirees meets for lunch on the second Thursday of each month at 12 p.m. On May 14th we will gather at Brasserie 513 in Califon. Please see the sign-up link emailed from the Parish Office to reserve your place at the table.



Needles and Hooks Club



The next meeting of the Needles and Hooks Club will be on Tuesday, May 19th. Come join us and work on your crocheting, knitting, needlepoint and whatever else you enjoy. We will still be glad to teach anyone who is interested in learning to crochet. Bring your project and join in fellowship with us. We meet on the third Tuesday of each month, 4:00 - 5:30 in the CEB Great Room. Our next three meetings are 5/19, 6/16, and 7/21.

Somerset Patriots Baseball Game

Join friends from Zion on Saturday, May 30th, for our annual outing to TD Ballpark in Bridgewater to enjoy an evening of baseball and fireworks! Tickets are \$10/pp and must be purchased in advance. Please email the Parish Office as soon as possible to reserve your seats. Play ball!





Youth & Family Ministry at Zion

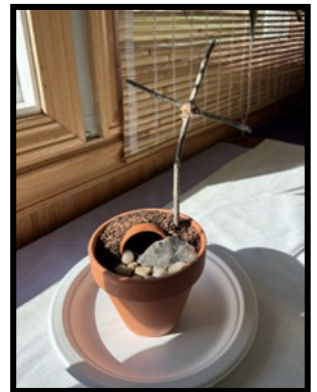
by Jaime VanNostrand

In the month of April, Zion's Youth and Family ministry has transitioned to a faith formation theme of NEW LIFE! We have talked each week in Sunday School about resurrection, the Easter Season, the natural rhythms of Spring, and all of the ways that God sows NEW LIFE into the world all around us!

While we did not gather for Sunday School on the first Sunday of the month, Zion's youth and families joined with the rest of the congregation in celebrating the NEW LIFE of Jesus' resurrection during our two Easter Sunday worship services!



When we returned to Sunday School on Sunday, April 12, we celebrated NEW LIFE by making our own resurrection gardens! Each student made their own recreation of the empty tomb with terracotta pots, soil, stones, sticks, and grass seed. Certainly, the NEW LIFE of the resurrection was central to the activity, but it was also woven into several other elements of the morning. We spoke about the NEW LIFE of spring before we went out onto the CEB grounds to gather several of the physical elements we would need to complete our project. Students were even given the opportunity to help foster NEW LIFE as they planted grass seed in their resurrection gardens. They learned that if they tended to their gardens, they could see NEW LIFE emerge in each new blade of grass!



Students finished the month with two classroom Sundays before transitioning into the closing month and final faith formation theme (GROWING FAITH BEYOND OUR WALLS) of the program year. This closing theme is meant to send students into the summer with a sense that their faith will continue to grow and change even when they aren't gathering together for Sunday School each week!



To support that theme, we will open the month with Camp Sunday, a special celebration of outdoor ministry. In both Sunday School and worship, we will highlight the many gifts of engaging our faith in God's creation. We will give special thanks for our ministry partner, Cross Roads Camp. Please join us for all the fun in your favorite outdoor clothing!

On the following Sunday, May 10, we will cast our gaze even further BEYOND OUR WALLS as we gather to pack gift boxes for Operation Christmas Child that will be sent all around the world! Please join us as we support this far-reaching ministry.

On Saturday, May 16, we will refocus on Cross Roads Camp as a group of Zion volunteers heads to camp for their Opening Day volunteer event where folks from around the synod will offer their time and talents in an effort to prepare the camp for a busy summer season! Please reference your weekly announcement email or youth and family email for a link to sign up.

Our busy May programming will come to a close the following day, Sunday, May 17. During the Sunday School hour students will have an abbreviated Bible lesson in their age-based classrooms before coming together in the Great Room for a closing celebration. But that's not the end of the day's fun! Following the 11am worship service, children, youth, families, and mentors are invited to share a pizza lunch before heading out to Farm View Golf Center for a round of mini golf! Don't miss our final Seasonal Social of the program year!



Open Cupboard Food Pantry

The Open Cupboard Food Pantry is in need of several items this month, including:

Coffee, jelly (grape & strawberry preferred), cans of soup and broth, baked beans, canned vegetables (corn, beans, peas, potatoes, diced tomatoes), body wash & bar soap, toothpaste, and toilet paper.



As always, ShopRite gift cards (\$10 increments) are welcome.

Please place items in the large basket in church narthex or in the bin in the CEB entryway, and please contact Bonnie Stanski with any questions or concerns at bonniestanski@gmail.com. Thank you!

Faith Kitchen Update

It was a rainy, chilly day, but a hearty meal was served at Faith Kitchen. People eagerly ate their meatball sandwiches, salad, chips, and bananas, and many came up for seconds. We served 60 plates and 64 take out meals. Our team this Thursday, led by John McAleer, consisted of John & Wendy Minerowicz, and Steve & Barb Surhoff. It's a wonderful experience serving such a grateful crowd and also wonderful was our fellowship while sharing Jann McAleer's delicious apple coffee cake.



Saturday's Faith Kitchen volunteers of Cindy Rupprecht, Sue Swanson, Melanie & Jennifer Hodges, and Helen Livingston served a delicious meal of BBQ chicken, fiesta pasta salad, green salad and fruit cup to many hungry and grateful guests. We prepared 57 eat-in meals and 72 meals to go. Many guests stopped by to say thank you and to let us know how much they enjoyed their meal. Thank you, Zion, for supporting and feeding the hungry!



Inspired Investment: Giving Summary

From the Stewardship Committee — Issue 3 of an ongoing series

This is the third article in our Stewardship series. Previous articles have covered 1) Facilities, and 2) Engagement & Growth. This month we are going to look at our current 2026 giving.



1st Quarter Summary

For 2026, we are blessed to have 53 families who made a pledge last fall. Of these, 36 have met or exceeded their pledge to date. This group includes 12 who have completed their total pledge amount for the year. Thank you!

The 53 pledging families have given \$185,800 through March, which is over 58% of the total amount pledged for the year. From those who did not submit a pledge for 2026 we have received an additional \$14,600. Our total General Fund income in the first quarter is \$200,400. This is over 48% of the projected income for the year. Thank you!

This is good news. We're exceeding expectations! We are off to a healthy start for the year. We do need to be mindful of the fact that the total projected income for this year does not fully cover our approved budget expenditures. Council has also discussed that our facilities are likely to need attention in the near future and will require resources that are not in our 2026 budget.

What can you do?

Are you unsure about where you are in meeting your 2026 pledge or in your annual giving? You can check your first quarter statement recently distributed from the Parish Office. You can also send an email to our Financial Secretary, John Rustwick, at jrustwick@gmail.com. If you did not submit a pledge for 2026, please consider doing so. And if you can grow your giving, please do!

Thank you!

Endowment Fund News

The Endowment Committee will be sponsoring the first Endowment Sunday for 2026 on Mother's Day, May 10th. The other Endowment Sundays for 2026 will be on Father's Day, June 21st, and All Saints Sunday, November 1st.

There is \$30,077 from Endowment Fund earnings available for ministry opportunities in 2026. This amount is determined by taking 3% of a 3-year average of the fund. The Church Council is open to suggestions on ways to use the funds to support our ministries. YTD \$1,500 has been donated to the NJ Synod Compensation Aid Fund, \$5,000 to Feed My Starving Children, \$250 to the American Cancer Society/Canton Twp. Relay for Life, \$336.74 for an Apple TV in the Youth Room, \$1,500 for new batteries and pad for the AED Unit in the CEB, and \$1,000 for the House Next Door Pastor's Retreat, leaving a current balance of \$20,490.26 still available to support 2026 ministries.

Please consider giving to the Zion Lutheran Church Endowment Fund on May 10th as a tribute to all mothers or to commemorate and celebrate a significant milestone in your family's church life, such as a baptism, confirmation, or wedding. Keep in mind that the Endowment Fund only grows with contributions from members and friends of Zion -- those who share the vision of not only a living memorial for loved ones, but also recognize that upon maturity the fund will provide significant monetary grants for Zion's ministries ... forever.

Envelopes marked "Endowment Fund" will be available at the church on May 10th. If you are worshipping virtually, please consider mailing a check marked "Endowment" to the Parish Office, or you can make a contribution through Venmo.

Please contact any member of the Endowment Committee (Mike Donnelly, Ted Jermansen, and Rick Schroeder) if you have any questions.

