

Dear members and friends of Zion,

On behalf of the Church Office and Council leadership, I would like to use this space to clear up some misimpressions that were left with last month's edition of *The Zion Herald*. All of us felt the need to emphasize **our support for** the efforts in Christian Education to find ways to strengthen the services we are offering with our Sunday School program. The challenges we face in this area of ministry are daunting. It is no secret to any of us that we are looking to improve our consistency in attendance at Sunday School and to broaden the base of parental involvement. As the comments that follow this article from Renee Schrader (Elder, Christian Education) and Darlene Milavickas (President), and Suzanne Walters (Vice President) will underscore, it is our intention **to build upon** the good things we have done in the past.

Council's discussion of the decision to return to some traditional ways of organizing Sunday School classes was not intended to call the decisions of Christian Education into question, but to learn more about how we as Council could support them. All of us appreciate the good work that Debbie Fox and Lisa Roman have done in dedicating themselves to the work of our Sunday School over the past several years. We have no doubt that their desire to make changes is related solely to our common hope to strengthen what we are doing in Christian Education. When we reorganized Church Council by creating various "ministries" with "elders" to oversee and support these ministries, it was our intention and commitment to empower our fellow members, who had heard God's call and sensed Zion's needs, in responding to these areas of life and ministry as a congregational family. Our desire is to model mutual support for one another, for it is only through mutual support that we will succeed as a congregation.

Zion cannot grow as a congregation without growing our Sunday School. That is what signals a healthy ministry among our younger families, and these signals help to attract new families into our fold. These are mutually reinforcing dynamics. During the course of the past year more families have been drawn closer to the life of our church. We have seen this at worship. But we have yet to cross the critical threshold where our levels of involvement energize present participants with a joy that attracts new participants. In other words, our Sunday School needs your active commitment and regular participation. You will be surprised by how much growth your input and involvement can generate. That's what Debbie Fox and Lisa Roman want this year; that's what Marian Ellsworth and Jeff Hissong wanted last year; that's what our Church Council wants, too: a healthy congregation growing in mutual support, attracting newcomers into the joy of being about the business of building God's kingdom as we **grow in love and service by grace**.

In His service, and yours,
Pastor Sherwindt

And Now, A Word From Council Leadership . . .

**FROM THE CHURCH COUNCIL PRESIDENT,
THE CHURCH COUNCIL VICE PRESIDENT,
OUR ELDER FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATION:**

This letter is in regard to the summary of the minutes from the January Council meeting that appeared in the February newsletter. Within that summary was a report about the Christian Education ministry's decision to change the Sunday School format. There was also a statement about some Council members' questioning the ministry's decision. We would like to clarify any misunderstandings that the summary may have caused.

The Council membership was not questioning Christian Education's decision, but instead was trying to gather as much information about it as possible so as to provide full support. The Council has faith in the various ministries to make decisions that will best suit their needs, and Council's inquiries in this matter were not meant as second-guessing the resolutions of the Christian Education ministry.

It is no secret that Zion has a history of inconsistent Sunday School attendance patterns, both from the children and the staff. After studying these patterns, the ministry team members considered the wishes of the parents, children, and staff, which were obtained through a written survey and subsequent telephone conversations. Christian Ed concluded that, with the number of children and staff we now have, it would be better for the program to return to a classroom format, incorporating strengths from the rotational program as we go.

As past Christian Education chairperson, Marian Ellsworth has done a tremendous job of using her experience, teaching skills, and creativity, not to mention endless patience, to grow and expand the Sunday School experience for Zion's children. We are all very grateful to her and all who have worked with her for their time, dedication, and contributions. We are indeed very blessed that Debbie Fox and Lisa Roman have stepped forward to lead our Christian Ed ministry, and we thank them for their hard work and dedication. Their commitment has enabled us to experience a seamless transition in the leadership of our Sunday School program. Our children are the beneficiaries!

The families of Zion continue to benefit from the willingness of people such as these who commit to teaching the Gospel of our Lord to our children. Take advantage of such an opportunity! Make the effort to attend Sunday School regularly and participate in the mission of educating our children. Follow the example of our Christian Education ministry team, support their efforts, respond to their requests for help. Recognize and appreciate fellow members who are trying to help us accomplish our mission *to grow in love and service by grace*.

Darlene Milavickas, Council President

Suzanne Walters, Vice President

Renee Schrader, Christian Education Elder

FELLOWSHIP HONOREE FOR MARCH: HARRY BUZBY

Many of you remember two distinguished-looking gentleman who always sat in a front pew for Sunday worship. They were Harry Buzby and a friend, Hubert Roy. They both have been missed at worship. Harry has been a member of Zion since March 14, 1995. But due to circumstances, he is unable to attend now. Dick and Edna Smith visit Harry regularly and said he loves to talk, reminisce and share golf stories. I volunteered to interview him for our March honoree. He accepted my questions in a warm manner and has an amazing memory for his age.

Harry David Buzby was born in Brattleboro, Vermont on January 29, 1912. So, you see, he is a young 92 years. His parents were Albert and Lucy (Clough) Buzby. They moved from Vermont to the Chicago area, where he grew up and received his education. He remarked that the city has grown to the rural area where he once lived. His father was a carpenter, and Harry his helper. When he was 23 years of age, he went to work in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He worked as an apprentice printer for the Fort Wayne Journal Gazette for five years, before enlisting in the Army. While in the Fort Wayne area, he met his lovely wife, Gwendolyn June. They were married on December 29, 1941, before he went into the military service.

He joined the Army in January 1941, took his training at Fort Riley, Kansas, where he served in the Horse Calvary. His Army tour took him to Iceland for three years. He enjoyed the people, as they were very educated, literate people. He joked that, while there, he became one of the "fish heads" also. He then served military service in France. When he returned to the States, he and Gwendolyn purchased a home. They had a big yard and garden. They loved flowers and the small animals, especially the squirrels. He resumed his work as a printer at the Journal Gazette for 34 years. His wife worked at General Electric for 37 years. His wife died in 1992. They had shared a good life together for 50 years and 3 months. They had no children, but were blessed by other family relatives.

Harry came to Ohio in 1994 and moved to his present residence at Heather Ridge, an assisted living facility, in 1995. His niece, Gloria Prose, is associated with Heather Ridge. He speaks lovingly of his niece's family and proudly shows off their pictures. Harry attends worship services at Heather Ridge, which are scheduled at 2:00 p.m. on Sundays. Harry's favorite song is *In The Garden*. He has a beautiful plaque in his room with the Scripture verse, John 3:16, and also one with the Scripture verses, John 14:1-3. His hobbies are golf, which he started as a caddy. In his prime playing days, he could hit in the low 80s. He likes bingo and playing pool once in a while at The Fox and Hound. He likes to wear brown; blue is his next favorite color.

Edna and I treated Harry with Valentine candy and homemade cookies. He was a warm, receptive gentleman. Greeting cards, notes, and calls would be appreciated.

Betty Tracy and Edna Smith

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

In February, we appropriately studied some lessons of God's love – agape love! We celebrated this love with a Valentine's Day Party on the 15th. On the weekend before Valentine's Day, we had a great time snow tubing at Alpine Valley. Thirty-two of us weathered the cold, and were rewarded with a wonderful evening of wintry fun. We hope to establish a monthly schedule of fun family activities. We also got an early start on the children's Easter Program during February.

The month of March will be devoted to Easter. We will practice for the Children's Easter Program — entitled *The Pageant that Almost Wasn't* — during the Sunday School hour during the entire month of March. The program is about a play director who struggles to put on a pageant telling the Easter Story. We will see several Easter bunnies, butterflies and even the Three Wise Men. It is a fun program for the children to tell the story in a new way!

Parents Take Note: the Children's Program will be performed Palm Sunday, April 4th, at both services, 8:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Also, there will be an Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday, April 11th, during the Sunday School hour. As you can see, between sacred services and special events, Holy Week has much to offer for our children.

Anyone and Everyone: If you are at all interested in helping with Sunday School or the Easter Program, please contact Debbie Fox or Lisa Roman. We are grateful for any help you can give!

THE YOUTH OF ZION

A great group of youth and leaders from Zion joined 700 Lutherans from northeast Ohio on the weekend of January 2—4 at this year's edition of the Winter Gathering, an annual event sponsored by the Lutheran Youth Organization and the Northeastern Ohio Synod. Zion's ten youth and four youth leaders may not have always had their Eyes on the Prize (the theme of the gathering), but they clearly had a great deal of fun (the real intent of this event). Pillow fights, buckets of ice, mystery juice, hanging together: a lot of good things happened for our group. We put together a light-hearted presentation for worship at Zion on January 25 to highlight the connection between our youth program and our congregational life. We shared our pictures, some stories, and a lot of laughs.

The Youth of Zion enjoyed their evening of snow tubing so much that they wouldn't go home! They stayed at the church all night long, and were here on time for Sunday School and worship! The very next Friday, it was up to the Cleveland Convocation Center, where a carload of us were there for a very, very loud evening of Christian Rock music at the Winter Jam.

Our youth now look forward to THE BIBLE BOWL, which is scheduled for Sunday, February 29, at St. John's in New Franklin. Our coaches, Wayne Slease and Todd Elsass, claim that we are as ready as we've ever been, with such first-stringers as Ryan Elsass, Matt Slease, Caroline Amatangelo, Valerie Cizek, Todd Cizek, Becca Coulter, and Chloe Horger. A reception is planned for our Bible Bowl team during Sunday School on March 7.

CONGREGATIONAL NEWS

Wednesday, March 3rd, is the date for our Congregational Meeting. We begin with dinner in Memorial Hall at 6:15 p.m., and will continue with our meeting in the sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. We look forward to the election of several new Council members, whose terms will begin July 1st.

As we look back on 2003, it might be of interest to know that Total Income figures held up pretty well in comparison with 2002 – slight increases in some areas, but not large enough to indicate stronger trends developing. We were able to maintain strong levels of average weekly attendance at worship, with 175 in 2003, compared to 167 in 2002. The area where we displayed our most impressive strength was **benevolence**.

Support of our Northeastern Ohio Synod and ELCA-related ministries was \$27,208.⁰⁰. Support for local ministries here in our own church neighborhood was \$21,143.⁰⁰. This latter category includes our support for Habitat for Humanity, discretionary assistance, with the largest part of support going to Zion's Food Pantry. These are important ministries, and we thank you for your outstanding support. The good news is that Total Benevolence amounted to \$48,351.⁰⁰, which is well over 22% of Zion's offering income. It's true that we still have on-going needs when it comes to meeting our current operating expenses; but this return of strength to the generosity we know as benevolence says a great deal about who we are and what our vision for ministry is. It says that we are on the way **to growing in love and service by grace**.

MORE FINANCIAL FACTS

The financial facts for January provided some signs of encouragement, especially when compared with what we experienced in January last year. In January of 2003, we ran a Current Expense Deficit of over \$6,000.00, with Operating Income of \$14,229.40. In January of 2004, we cut the Current Expense Deficit for the month to under \$3,000.00, with Operating Income of \$17,880.42.

We are very appreciative of your effort to increase our income for January. Your generosity showed. But as you can see, we mustn't let down our guard because winter's expenses continue to put pressure on our finances. Between special repairs, snow plowing, and utilities, you can bet that February and March will surely be a challenge for us. We are thankful for your support, and ask that you remain vigilant in your giving as we move through March and into April. The bottom line for Zion is that we are doing our best to keep our heads above water, but overall giving still needs to improve in order to keep pace with both our budgeted goals and our current expenses.

FINANCES FOR JANUARY

OPERATING INCOME:	17,880.42
CURRENT EXPENSES:	20,808.59
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT):	(2,928.17)

It's not how much we give, but how much love we put into giving. *Mother Theresa*

Don't give until it hurts;
Give until it feels good.

OUTREACH & SERVICE

A CLOTHING CLOSET UPDATE: Let's face it, the Clothing Closet has been a great success for Zion. Many needy people have taken advantage of the clothes that are available here. The truth is that many of these people have few other places to turn for such nice clothing items. The success of the Clothing Closet is the result of the excellent support we get from the members of Zion. Thank you, Shirley Cavender, for getting us some clothing racks at the mall. Thank you to all for the toys, the shower stool, and all the other specialty items you have so willingly provided. Thank you all so very much – Karen Kirk, McKenzie, and Candace

A FOOD PANTRY UPDATE: We have received great support and wonderful help from so many; but we need more! In particular, we need more helpers with all that we have to do on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month. We know that some signed up to help through the "Time and Talents" form that is on display in the Narthex. We will use everyone who expressed interest; but we still need more help. Watch for announcements in the bulletin, and for sign up schedules on the bulletin boards. We look forward to coordinating your interests more effectively, both for the sake of those we serve, and of those doing the serving!

FOOD OF THE MONTH FOR MARCH: SUGAR. We are focusing on regular white sugar, in 4 or 5 lb. packages. Again, thanks so much for caring – Shirley Cavendar, Margaret Porter, and so many more, including Lauren and Charlie, Steve and Ashley, Helen, Dick, George....

REACHING IN AT ZION

ZION'S SATURDAY EVENING ENTERTAINMENT CLUB got back on track in January with the purchase of some Entertainment Books, an interesting group of diners, and an evening out at Lolli's on January 24. Once again, over twenty persons joined us after the Saturday evening service for a wonderful evening of good fellowship and great food. We have resumed a schedule of getting together for dinner after worship on the fourth Saturday of the month. Everyone is invited to join us. We have more than enough Entertainment cards or coupons to go around. February 28 is our next date, and then March 27 after that. Make it a point to join in the fun. Please feel free to call Pastor Sherwindt or Chuck Danner with your interest in attending.

THE ELDERBERRIES are hosting our **St. Patrick's Day Party** for our homebound members on Saturday, March 13th, from 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m. Visiting, music, games, and snacks are a few of the fun things happening. Bring a friend or a family member as a guest. Please contact the Church Office (330-499-3909) with your interest in joining us, and contact Darlene Milavickas with any questions about the Elderberries, our homebound members, or our St. Patrick's Day Party.

ZION'S SPRING CRAFT SHOW, scheduled for Saturday, March 20, here at the church, may have to become our *Fall Craft Show*. We have found the goal of recruiting 50 to 75 crafters for our Craft Show a good deal more challenging than anticipated. Unless we can recruit a minimum of 25 crafters, it may make more sense to push our efforts back to the fall of this year.

FAMILY NEWS at ZION

BEFORE AND AFTER EASTER (a book by Debbie Trafton O'Neil): This book has activities for each day in Lent, the celebration of Easter, and the weeks after Easter to Pentecost. This is meant to be a family oriented book with Bible passages to be read together, then a craft, service project, reflections, as well as suggestions for family worship. This book will make your Lenten journey more meaningful for your whole family.

The Resource Center is rich with BIBLES. Both adult and children's Bibles are available. If you have anything to look up in the scriptures, or want to look up a children's version of a Bible story, be sure to look in the Resource Center. (By the way, our Resource Center continues to improve – both its creaturely comforts and technological upgrades. Stop by and see.)

REJOICE IN THE GIFT OF NEW LIFE: Congratulations to Alan and Lei Fahrner on the birth of their beautiful baby girl, Anne Catherine, born on Wednesday, February 11th. Their stay at the hospital was brief. Mother and daughter are doing marvelously, as is Anne's very proud Dad. The entire extended family could not be happier with how richly blessed they have been with this new addition to their lives.

Almighty God, heavenly Father, you have blessed us with the joy of new life and the care of children. As we bring them up, give us calm strength and patient wisdom, that we may teach them to love whatever is just and true and good, following the example of our Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

[*Lutheran Book of Worship*, page 51]

ODDS 'n ENDS at ZION

A THANK YOU ... FROM ANN SEMPLE: to Pastor Sherwindt and the whole congregation for your prayers and cards and visits – You know the word *Thanks* is such a small word but it certainly has a big meaning. So, *thank you*, God, for all the things you have done for me. *Thank you*, Pastor, for visits and prayers. And *thank you*, brothers and sisters of the congregation, for your prayers, cards, and visits. The peace of the Lord be with you all.

Your sister in Christ, Ann Semple

DID YOU HAPPEN TO KNOW THAT the Rev. Dr. Moeahabo Phillip Moila will celebrate his consecration as bishop of the Northern Diocese of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Southern Africa, our Companion Synod, on February 29th. He is elected for life, or until he chooses to retire. Bishop Marcus Miller will travel to Seshego, right outside Pietersburg in South Africa, to represent our Northeastern Ohio Synod at the Service of Consecration. On our behalf he will present Bishop Moila with two gifts – a red stole, representing the Spirit's guidance in his ministry, and a banner, representing the bond that makes us *Partners in Christ*. At the request of our Companion Synod Committee, **Betty Tracy** (from Zion) and Evelyn Bair (from Bethel) worked together to make this beautiful banner. When Bishop Miller is visiting our partners, he will also deliver some additional stoles and paraments, compliments of the Women of Zion Lutheran Church, with special leadership offered by **Edna Smith**. We look forward to hearing more about Bishop Miller's Episcopal visit upon his return.

A LENTEN MEDITATION FROM THE INTERNET

Responding to themes introduced with last month's *Editor's Note*
(Resources from the online files of the Rev. Dr. Melvin Lindberg)

As we begin Lent 2004, many Christians around the world include fasting as part of the observance. There are many kinds of fasting. For many of us, however, Lenten fasting means giving up something, some food, or some activity for the duration of Lent. Why do we do this? What's our motivation? What do we really receive as a result?

The prophets Isaiah and Joel had to deal with this in Israel. Israel's sin was not lack of worship but lack of integrity. The prophets were not as concerned with outward worship forms as they were with inner attitudes. Isaiah insists that religious exercises designed to impress God are worthless. Not surprisingly, we struggle with the same questions today. We must deal with the question of attitude with regard to our entire worship experience, not just during Lent — and not just on Sunday mornings. But now is a good time to try to grasp a better understanding of our own motivations and responses to God.

In *Upper Room Disciplines*, 1996, Harriet E. Crosby pointed out that "The people of Israel lived as though their fasting had nothing to do with the rest of their lives, how they treated people at work, or their use of violence." As we've read the Old Testament prophets, there is a crescendo to the message that true worship comes from the heart; that true worship comes from a heartfelt personal relationship with God. Isaiah redefined fasting in terms of our relationship with people around us. When the people asked if God had not seen their fasting, he replied, "*Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the homeless with shelter — when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?*" [Isaiah 58:6-7]

Isaiah reminds us that this kind of fasting, this kind of worship and response to God would have us remove injustice and oppression, save food to share with the hungry. In short, Isaiah tells us that true fasting and worship experience is manifested in our relationship to others around us. Joel's invitation and admonishment to Israel and to us couldn't be more graphic and convincing. Even as God invited ancient Israel, he invites us today: "*Yet even now,*" says the LORD, "*return to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; rend your hearts and not your garments.*" Return to the LORD, your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." [Joel 2:13] Rend your heart and not your garments, pleads Joel. It's what's in your heart that counts.

As we approach Lent, 2004, one of our prayers might be the prayer of Psalm 51: "*Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence and take not your holy spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of your salvation and uphold me with your free spirit.*" [Psalm 51:10-13]

