

December 2006 Newsletter

A WORD FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear members and friends of Zion,

I would like to begin the new church year on a note of thanksgiving, offering my thanks to the Church Council, which, in a brief moment preceding our October meeting, presented me with a beautiful card and a generous gift certificate to *LeFever's Riverside Grille*. Marilyn and I enjoyed a wonderful evening and a delicious dinner on a beautiful night in Cuyahoga Falls - grilled pork chops with pumpkin mashers for Marilyn, horseradish crusted salmon with roasted root vegetables for me, with espresso and bananas foster bread pudding for two. Again, thank you for the thought, the dinner, and the card. The card drew upon artwork found in the Sistine Chapel, with the finger of God reaching down to us, accompanied by the words of Roy Lessin, "*Just think, you're not here by chance, but by God's choosing; His hands formed you and made you the person you are. He compares you to no one else - you are one of a kind. You lack nothing that His grace can't give you. He has allowed you to be here at this time in history to fulfill His special purpose for this generation.*"

These are words that can, and do, apply to all of us; and to make that point stronger, the card quotes Peter, who tells us that "*God has given us His very great and precious promises, so that through them we may participate in the very nature of God's life.*" [2nd Peter 1:4] Isn't this what we are doing here at Zion by participating in the life of the church, which, as the Scriptures boldly say, is the Body of Christ? Imagine, God has chosen us to be here, called us by name, formed us in His own image, and given us all the gifts we need to fulfill His special purpose for us; and that special purpose is to know the love of His Son, and more, to find true life by believing in Him and living in His Name. That is what our life together at Zion fosters and celebrates. We have been so blessed in so many ways this past year. December begins yet another church year of waiting for the Lord's coming, even as we know He is already alive among us now. He is alive through our ministries. He is alive through our leadership. He is alive through the work we do and the love we share.

We just finished our *Healthy Membership* course between the services on Sunday mornings. It was our way of helping newer members discover what they've gotten themselves into by joining Zion. However, it quickly became a great introduction to the wonderful gifts God has given us with our newer members, many of whom took the time to make the point of how impressed they were by the sense of unity they found at Zion, and by the camaraderie they have come to enjoy. That is God's doing, sometimes present among us like a mighty wind, and at other times more like the gentle breeze of Jesus' love using us to make His presence real. If some of us were praying, all I want for Christmas is a healthy church, we've all had a nice reminder of the Good News that God answers prayer, or, perhaps better said, the process is underway and ongoing. Imagine, we're not here by chance, but God has called us, chosen us, God has allowed us to be here at this time and in this place to fulfill his special purpose for us and for Zion! It is great to have this feeling about the work we are called to do and the community we are privileged to share. May our faith in God's presence and our confidence in Zion's future continue to grow stronger as we continue to grow healthier in and through Christ our Lord.

In His service, and yours,
Pastor Sherwindt

SPEAKING ABOUT FOOD

The *pastoral appreciation* dinner-for-two was great, but we've got even better fare on the menu as we look ahead to December. Our Sunday Evening Advent Dinners begins with a feast at St. Paul's Catholic Church on the First Sunday in Advent, which is December 3rd. Our joint Advent service with St. Paul's has become a wonderful holiday tradition, and this year's edition promises to build on the highlights of past years. Dinner begins at 5:30 p.m., with the program of music and prayer starting at 6:30 p.m.

Then, on the following Sunday, December 10th, it's back to Zion, when the Chancel Guild will host our Advent Dinner. Carole Singer will then lead us through a musical celebration of *Carols from around the World*. What a treat, featuring Carole's love of music, love of carols, and love of the traditions that embody both! You'll not want to miss this -dinner at 5:30 p.m., our program at 6:15 p.m., and we'll be heading for home by 7:00 p.m.

On the Third Sunday in Advent, December 17th, we will feature our family craft with a focus on Chrismons, short for *Christ mono-grams*, Christmas tree decorations that tell the Christmas story with biblical symbols using the colors white and gold. The Men of Zion will host dinner at 5:30 p.m., and the Youth of Zion will lead our devotions. We've always had great fun with Carol Rossbach leading us through the craft. Then, with our Sanctuary decorated for the season, the joy of Christmas will fill our worship.

In case these three opportunities for great food are not enough, the Chancel Guild Christmas Dinner is scheduled for Tuesday, December 12th. The menu looks divine, and the company, almost saintly. We've got a delicious December on tap. Make it a point to join us. You'll be glad you did, and so will we.

A WORD FROM OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR - SUZANNE WALTERS

Ah, December, one of the busiest months of the year. The calendar is filling up with dates for shopping, decorating, partying, baking, wrapping, and card-writing. Don't forget to leave some room for singing! Many musical opportunities await, and they are described below. But first, I would like to revisit some musical highlights of the last month.

On *November 19th*, at the 8:00 a.m. service, our senior choir sang the beautiful anthem, *Give Thanks*, appropriate for Thanksgiving, which was right around the corner. They ended the service with the lovely *The Lord Bless You and Keep You* as the choral benediction. The congregation noticed how much the choir's singing was enhanced by the addition of two carefully positioned microphones, one of the welcome features of our new sound system. Our newly dedicated sound system was fully implemented by the Praise Team during the second service. We received many compliments about how much better the congregation members were able to hear, and this was exciting! Our service was enlivened even more by the presence of our children's choir singing a beautiful anthem entitled, *Keeper of the Song*. Seven of our Senior Choir members made room in their Thanksgiving schedules to sing with choir members from other North Canton churches at St. Paul's Catholic Church on Wednesday, *November 22nd*, at the North Canton Ministerial Association's Ecumenical Thanksgiving Eve Service. A grand total of twenty-nine singers made a joyful noise on that Wednesday evening in the newly renovated sanctuary at St. Paul's, and then many stayed to

enjoy a short fellowship opportunity with other community members. It was a special night indeed.

If you missed the Thanksgiving Eve service, but are still interested in seeing St. Paul's beautiful new sanctuary, Sunday, *December 3rd*, is your chance! Our North Canton friends are hosting us for the first evening Advent service, when our *Zion Praise Team* will team up with St. Paul's *Instruments of Christ* youth praise band. Mark your calendar now to join our neighbors at St. Paul's for dinner and worship.

On Sunday, *December 17th*, at the 10:30 a.m. service, our children will present their Christmas program, a musical entitled *On Our Way to Bethlehem*. It is always heart-warming to watch and listen to children reaffirm their faith in the presence of Jesus in their lives by participating in the annual Christmas program. You certainly won't want to miss this year's performance!

The Children's Choir will be singing an anthem at the 6:00 p.m. service on Christmas Eve, so you will want to add this special service to your December calendar. The 8:00 p.m. Christmas Eve service will be led by the organ and the Senior Choir, with thirty minutes of special music preceding the service. The 10:30 p.m. service that evening will be led by a small ensemble of Praise Team members, and will also include some special music beforehand.

If you would like to get a head start on a *New Year's resolution*, why not become a member of Zion's Senior Choir? Perhaps you would like to just get your feet wet by joining us for the Christmas season, or simply take the plunge and join us for the long-term. Either way, you are more than welcome and we would love to have you. Our rehearsals are Wednesday evenings from 7:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Please consider participating in this important ministry of Zion Lutheran Church, and make a musical offering to the Lord.

CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

A great year continues, as attendance was almost perfect, and we were done in just over an hour. Laura Thompson, Carol Rossbach, Jayne Schrader, Dave Palumbo, Sharon Stout, Bob Lancashire, Lorin Beaber, Mary Humbert, Steve Ross, Cindy Ferry and Pastor Sherwindt were present. We missed Renee Schrader, and we are just about ready to recommend an Elder for the Social (Outreach) Ministry.

Our efforts for getting the new sound system up and running, along with funding it, have gone very well. We thank Brian Walters for his leadership and commitment. We've had great congregational support. 83 members have donated just about \$19,000 thus far. Chris Thomas, Bob Lancashire, and Mark Votaw have been great helpers, along with many others, including John Brokloff, Chuck Danner, Howard Dansizen, Pete Fenney, Gary Horton, Dale Jacobs, Mark Keaveny, Linda Lancashire, Garry Leed, Darlene Milavickas, Dave Palumbo, Steve Ross, Ron Singer, Kevin Walters, and Dean Yoder. We extend a special thank you to Jerry Pellegrino and Rick Galbraith, personal friends of Brian and sound system professionals, who helped us save thousands in equipment and consulting fees. We enjoyed a great day on November 19th, with the dedication of the sound system at worship and a reception between the services. Brian handed out some hilarious awards. Dale made his cinnamon rolls. Council members took care of the fresh fruit salad and drinks. We now look forward to training a team of volunteers to run the sound system during our worship services. We've had nice attendance at our training sessions, and there's still room for you if you would like to become a volunteer.

Steve Ross has begun to reorganize our Witness Ministry. with Pete Fenney. Jim Dansizen.

Howard Dansizen, Elaine Fidler, and Lorraine Weinman joining his team and deciding to meet on the last Wednesday of the month at 6:00 p.m. Also, we sent off the final proof for Zion's new pictorial directory, which we anticipate will be a great stocking stuffer for all of our members.

Lorin Beaber reported that we've made some great progress in keeping up with the needs of property maintenance, thanks, of course, to our hardworking trustees, Chris Thomas, Betty Boettler, John Brokloff, Beth Shaheen, and Mark Votaw. We continue to encounter substantial charges for repairing our aging boiler and heating system.

Mary Humbert reported on our efforts at organizing the Clothing Closet, and also met with the Youth Committee, which decided to meet regularly on the first Tuesday at 7:30 p.m. We've been working on getting our Youth Room furnished.

Dave Palumbo walked us through the Treasurer's Report, which showed good overall income, but a pesky deficit that seems to be testing our resolve in getting on top of our Operating Budget expenses.

Great News from Zion's Sunday School

UPCOMING EVENTS - MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Sunday, December 3: Children's Program Practice during Sunday School

Sunday, December 10: Children's Program Practice during Sunday School & 10:30 Service

Saturday, December 16: *Dress Rehearsal for Children's Christmas Program 10:00 a.m.*

Sunday, December 17: The Children's Christmas Program at the 10:30 a.m. service only

Sunday, December 24: There will be No Sunday School in the morning: See you tonight!

Sunday, December 24: The Children's Choir sings during our Family Service at 6:00 p.m.

SUNDAY SCHOOL: PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THE SIXTH GRADE

The month of December will be devoted to Christmas play practice and the Christmas story. This year's program is called *On Our Way to Bethlehem*. Through beautiful music and moving dialogue the children will tell the Christmas Story. Practice will be during Sunday School through December 17th. We will also practice during the 10:30 a.m. service on December 10th. Our Dress Rehearsal is set for Saturday, December 16th, when we will meet at 10:00 a.m. in the Sanctuary. We will have a pizza party afterwards at Noon to celebrate the kids' hard work. The kids are also invited to stay and help wrap the giving tree gifts after we have pizza. Our older youth will be joining us for pizza and gift wrapping.

Important Reminder: there will be no Sunday School on the morning of Christmas Eve! We resume our normal Children's Choir and Sunday School schedule on Sunday, December 31st.

ZION'S CHILDREN'S CHOIR CONTINUES

The Children's Choir practices each Sunday from 9:10 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. before Sunday School. Their schedule for singing through the program year is as follows:

Sunday, December 24th, Christmas Eve at the 6:00 p.m. Family Service

Sunday, January 28th, Epiphany 4 - at the 10:30 a.m. Family Service

Sunday, February 25th, Lent 1 - at the 10:30 a.m. Family Service

Sunday, May 13th, Mother's Day, at the 10:30 a.m. Family Service

Sunday, June 10th, Pentecost 2 - at the 10:30 a.m. Family Service

Thanks again to Suzanne Walters for the terrific job she has done with our kids! They sang *Keeper of the Song* in November and did a beautiful job! This month, we look forward to the Children's Christmas Program and Christmas Eve to hear their wonderful voices!

MORE GOOD NEWS FOR THE YOUTH OF ZION - OUR ADVENT GIVING TREE

The Youth of Zion have again sponsored a Giving Tree this Christmas season for several families in our community who can benefit from a little help from their friends at Zion. The Giving Tree (located in the Narthex) has tags with gift suggestions for these families. Please take a tag (or more), purchase the item, and bring the gift to the church, *unwrapped with the giving tag attached, by Friday December 15th*. Our youth will be getting together on Saturday, December 16th, around Noon to enjoy some pizza and then wrap all of the Giving Tree gifts so that they will be delivered to the families before Christmas Day.

Also, there will be a box in Luther Hall for household items like *toilet paper, tissue, paper towels, napkins, bar soap, toothpaste (adult & child), shampoo & conditioner (adult & child), dish soap* - and any other household item that will help with day-to-day living for these families. We have found that care packages for each family filled with these items are greatly appreciated. You are invited to help our youth help these families have a Merry Christmas, feeling God's love through the service we offer.

YOUTH & FAMILY ACTIVITY: A DICKENS CHRISTMAS IN CAMBRIDGE

Mark Votaw and Lorraine Weinman have suggested that we take our youth on a scenic drive to Cambridge, where there's lots to do to enjoy the holiday season. Cambridge has decorated for the season with over one hundred mannequins on the main street, set up in little vignettes depicting what Christmas was like in *Victoria-era London*. So, while we are not sure of the actual date, we would like to head south sometime in December, leaving from the church at 8:00 a.m. so that we can arrive in time to enjoy a ride on an *historic railroad* as we learn about the Central Ohio coal industry *circa 1875*. After lunch, we'll check out Main Street. take time to make our own Christmas ornament. and enjoy an ice cream sundae. too!

The National Museum of Cambridge Glass is very cool, a treat for anyone interested in elegant glassware made in Ohio. Yes, we know that everyone will be surprised by one of Ohio's many treasures. The cost will be around \$10.00, including lunch. If you are an older youth - say, retirement age - and you think that you might enjoy this adventure, by all means, come on along as a youth leader!

Since this portrayal of *A Dickens Christmas* in Cambridge is an exhibit that will run through January 15, 2007, we are sure that we will be able to settle on a date that works for many who would like to join us. We are hoping that this approach of having a family take the lead in planning our monthly event will help to keep more families on board as we work to build a stronger youth program .

CHECK OUT THE YOUTH ROOM

As we use the proceeds of the Craft Show to help furnish the Youth Room, we are thrilled to report that due to Mary Humbert's perseverance, Linda Ross' shopping skills, and Pastor Sherwindt's willingness to get to BJ's by 6:00 a.m. on the morning of Black Friday, the Youth Room now features a new television. It's a beauty ... nothing but the best for Zion's Youth.

THE MEN OF ZION

What a wonderful evening we enjoyed on the first Wednesday in November. Dr. Lester Mohler was all that we anticipated and more. The humanitarian work he described with the help of his many slides and stories opened our eyes to the magnitude of our world's needs and the importance for individuals to sense the difference they can make changing one life at a time. We saw miracles - the miracle of cleft palates repaired, the miracle of facial injuries transformed, the miracle of a hometown friend turned world-renown humanitarian, and recognized as such when Capital University conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Humanities, *honoris causa*, back in May of 2000. It was a great evening with a great man doing great work.

The truth is that Lester is still as humble, still as funny, still as gracious and as grateful as he's always been. He spoke to us about his life as if he were the one most surprised by the course his life had taken. He recalled in conversation how he stumbled into college, using a small scholarship from Zion to help make up his mind to go to Capital University. The rest is history. But, as it turned out, while we were busy trying to get our thank you to Lester just right, a note came in the mail to us, with a check, thanking us for inviting him.

"I had a great time visiting with the various people present at Zion and just enjoyed being back in my hometown. After talking with you, I felt it would be only appropriate to return Zion's scholarship gift with interest so that other students from the congregation could benefit as I did." Can you believe it?! Lester's gift returned our love ten-fold and more, giving us a glimpse of what it means to *pay God back with interest* for all we've been blessed to receive. The Men of Zion will meet on December 6, which is the first Wednesday of the month, with an unbelievable menu planned by Zion's Singing Chef. We'll be enjoying one of the traditional dishes of English fare, Roast Beef and Yorkshire Pudding, as in herb-encrusted prime rib au jus, with baked potato and mixed vegetables. Now how's that for a Christmas treat! We'll be expecting you. Please make plans to join us on *Wednesday, December 6th. at*

6:00 p.m. in Luther Hall.

DECEMBER SENIOR BIRTHDAYS



Happy Birthday to:

Dorothy Jenkins	December 7
Fred Elsass	December 12
Ruth Brigham	December 27

DECEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

Happy Anniversary to:

Jerry & Kathleen Iams	December 4
Dale & Faye Shankle	December 4
Charles & Shelly Shankle	December 12
Don & Shirl Hertler	December 12
Charlie & Shirley Cavender	December 15
Dean & Donna Yoder	December 22
Fred & Carolyn Elsass	December 28
John & Ginny Rhodes	December 30
Steve & Linda Ross	December 31

THE WOMEN OF ZION

We enjoyed great success with this year's *Thankoffering Sunday*. Many of Zion's women participated in our three services as worship leaders. The prayers and litanies in our services highlighted the work of women, both in the ELCA and right here at Zion. The Thankoffering collection now totals \$878, all of which will be sent to *WELCA* headquarters in Chicago to assist with ministries that criss-cross the nation and span the globe. We extend our thanks to all who helped with the service and contributed to our collection.

All women are invited to join us for our *monthly Bible study*, which will meet in Luther Hall on *December 19th at 9:30 a.m.* We've been continuing with a series of lessons focusing on the presence of God in suffering. This month's study will focus on the birth of Christ and the meaning of God's presence among us in the flesh, but we will also explore what some identify as the connection between suffering and sin.

All women are also invited to join in the fellowship *Zion's Comfort Givers* enjoy on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays in Luther Hall. The fun begins at 9:30 a.m.

The *Chancel Guild Christmas Dinner* is on the calendar for Tuesday, December 12th, with the Social Get Together beginning at 6:00 p.m., and *Dinner* served at 6:30 p.m. The menu looks scrumptious: cranberry salad, baked chicken, baked white (or sweet) potato, green beans with bacon & onion, rolls, warm cobbler, coffee and tea. Please let Anna Mae LeBeau know of your desire to join us (by December 3rd if possible).

Please help fill the Sanctuary with the colors of Christmas by purchasing your *Christmas poinsettias*. The cost is \$8.50 per plant. We'll need your orders by December 13th.

ZION'S FOOD PANTRY

The Thanksgiving Grand Prix: Our drivers were in place, and the carts were lined up to insure a rapid lap of the track. One after the other they took off with lightning speed from the gym to the clients' cars. They rounded the corner with even more speed, returning to the gym for their next lap. The pit crew (i.e., the pantry crew) was in place, surrounded by all the necessary tools (food) to insure a fast fill of the shopping carts, and an even faster return to the pantry track. The pit crew bosses were prepared with pens and pencils, clip-boards and long, long lists. By 2:15 p.m. that Tuesday afternoon the race had been won, not by just one individual, but by everyone: the Siffron group homes (homes for the mentally challenged), our pantry clients, the wonderful pantry crew and the many donors who contributed to *the Thanksgiving Grand Prix*.

By our estimates, we proudly provided *three-hundred-and-fifty people* the opportunity to celebrate Thanksgiving with a full belly. Every year we worry about not having enough funds or food for Thanksgiving, and every year we are reminded that God provides ... through you.

In late summer our food pantry clients are blessed with fresh vegetables right from Zion's own garden. But that would not be possible without Ruth and Verle Elsass. Verle is the muscle and Ruth is the green thumb. Allow me to extend my appreciation for all of your effort. Thank you to every one who helps in their own way to make the pantry a Grand Prix all the time.

May God bless each and every one of you -
Shirley Cavender, Margaret Porter, and our Thanksgiving
Grand Prix Pit Crew and Drivers

OUR YEAR-END GIVING

None will dispute that this year has been an exceptionally generous year by every measure. Our financial support for the new sound system raised \$19,000. Special collections for our food & clothing ministries (both here and in New Orleans) exceeded \$4,200. Our support for the Youth of Zion through the German Dinners & Craft Show exceeded \$4,200. All of these special drives assist with important ministries, and, it should be noted, they are above and beyond our support for the Operating Budget. The Operating Budget focuses primarily on staffing, basic ministries, basic property maintenance, utilities, and benevolence. When it comes to the budget, it seems that every year we just miss getting income to keep up with expenses. Last year we entered December almost even with expenses. We had every reason

to believe that we would surely break the cycle of pesky deficits and set a new trend of budgets-in-the-black, as it should be. Unfortunately, December's heating bill, together with a wee bit of over-confidence, left us a tad short of our goal. Let's change that trend this year. We are heading into December with a deficit that is a bit larger this year, but it is clearly within reach. The truth is - and the facts confirm - that we are a much healthier church than this pattern of small but pesky deficits suggests. Let's not take our generosity for granted. As we approach the end of the year, why not consider what it might mean to *pay God back with interest* for the many blessings we've received? We've got a lot to be thankful for ... and we've got a lot to be thankful with. So, let's be more vigilant this year - more determined, even a bit more generous - in thanking God for all He's done and all He's doing here among us.

MORE ODDS 'N ENDS

Zion was very happy to be surprised with a Thanksgiving that brought several new members into our congregational family. *Mike and Tina Linz* have been worshipping with us for some time, mostly on Saturday evenings, and they were happy to add to our thanks with their decision to join us.

Then, on Sunday, we welcomed yet another new member through the Sacrament of Baptism, *Benjamin James Sir Louis*. Ben is a part of *the Hilson connection* here at Zion, being the son of Rachel and Sean Hilson.

Speaking about baptisms, it won't be long before we're celebrating this blessed sacrament with *Amelia Grace Milek*, the newest addition to one of our newer families, Brian and Nicole Milek, along with children Lya, Kathryn, and Weston.

By the way, another of our newer families, Shannon and Dave McNamara, celebrated the birth of their second daughter *Grace Catherine*, on November 15, who now joins her excited older sister Hanna to make a happy family of four.

A Christmas Thank You from Diane Dunphy: "I wanted to take this opportunity to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and to thank you for making my job a pleasure. I truly enjoy talking and working with such a wonderful congregation. May God's richest blessings be with you and your families in the New Year."

Merry Christmas - Diane Dunphy

One final thought for Christmas: The reason for the season is not the birth of the baby but the death of the man. John 3:16 says it all: "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.*"

IN LOVING MEMORY OF EDDIE JOHN

A Memorial Service to Celebrate the Life of
Eddie John

October 21, 1927-October 28, 2006

November 1, 2006

**The Rev. Mark Sherwindt, Pastor
Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church**

For the entire duration of my presence here at Zion, Eddie has struggled with ill health, and it has been a struggle. It was wonderful to see from the pictures on display at the funeral home that Eddie knew a much different life than what he had experienced lately. Those photos show a vigorous, fun-loving man who had learned how to wear a beautiful smile. In the uniform, at his marriage, with kids in his arms, having fun with family and friends: that's a side of Eddie's life that I did not know. I truly wish that I could say more about that man - the man with the contagious smile and a love for life and family, and all of the stuff that makes us appreciate everything we have here on earth.

And then, there was the death of Patty, Eddie and Mary's daughter, and that left a scar on his heart from which Eddie never completely recovered. It is said that in the natural order of things, it is painfully out of sequence when a parent loses a child. It is all the harder when that child has become a young adult with so much promise and grace. It is something no parent is ever ready for, something that simply should not be, a loss that leaves a scar that never seems to heal. Eddie had all sorts of health conditions in sufficient number to distract him from the festering wound of Patty's tragic death, but they just added to the pain.

... One of life's inescapable ironies connects the joy that love inspires with the sting of loss that follows death. The more we love what God has given us, the deeper the sting when death takes it away. How infinitely true this must be for God, who loves without limit, from the depth of His very being. Every death everywhere on earth must tear at His heart. Then, there was the death of His Son, His very own Son, whom He gave up on the Cross for us. What love must have inspired God's gift of this life, and what loss must have followed His death. God surely knows the loss that stung Eddie so deeply with Patty's death. God knows this loss because He loved Eddie, because He loved Patty, just as He loved His own Son. Sure, it's different with God, since God is God. But the heart and soul of Christianity lives and breathes with this Good News that God is love, real love, the kind of love that fills our lives with joy, the kind of love that knows the tragic sadness of loss.

... I've always been fascinated by the story of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, which introduces sin's reign with death's presence. Our knowledge of good and evil gets all mixed up in the presence of death. In fact, death is very much related to our knowledge of good and evil. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a young pastor and theologian whose life was ended prematurely in a German prison during World War II, saw that the evil in good is that good dies, and that the good in evil is that evil dies. In Eddie's case, it may have seemed good that the burdens he bore and the suffering he endured ended when death came gently in the night. But it was not death that came as Eddie's friend, but love, God's love, the love that embraced him with the gentle touch of Jesus' hand extended to welcome him home. Death leaves nothing but loss in its wake. Jesus brings the hope and promise of life, true life, God's life, eternal life.

... God will not have death separating Him from those whom He loves, beginning, of course, with His very own Son, whom He raised from the dead, and extending as well to all of us who now know Jesus as our Savior and Lord. *Because He lives, we, too, shall live*: this is the faith that lives in our hearts. It is the Good News we claim for Eddie. It is the hope that lines our grieving with a shade of joy, a satisfying joy that is

ours forever ... for Jesus' sake and in Jesus' name. Amen
