

# September 2007 Newsletter

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## A WORD FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear members and friends of Zion,

Zion is blessed with some extraordinary generosity. It's evident with our offerings week in and week out. It's evident with the time that members invest in the ministries of the church. It's evident in the talents so many of us so selflessly share. It's also evident with the special fund-raising drives that are so regularly a part of each program year. Sometimes it's a benevolence project, like the Food Pantry, or the Giving Tree. Many times it has been a matter related to some aspect of property care. Lately, it's been our *Five-Year Property Renovation Plan*. The Sanctuary Renovation Plan has exceeded its goal! That's right: because of your generosity in giving, we have exceeded our target of \$23,900.00! That is truly amazing. Here we are in *Year #3* in a five-year plan, having successfully renovated the restrooms and the sound system, and the support not only continues, but grows!

You've heard about our wine-tasting extravaganza, which raised just about \$1,350 on a perfect evening in July, enjoying Joe and Renee Ramunni's backyard paradise, with a taste of some of the finest reds and crisp whites to come from the wine cellar of Dennis Laughlin, President of Arzell Zoning, Inc. You've heard about those wonderful prayer bracelets designed by our own Carol Rossbach, which sold in such great quantity that we raised another \$1,350.00, and a good deal more. I am sure that you all recall the great fun we had with the Rittman High School Steel Drum Band way back in April. The warm breezes of the Caribbean brought with it good fortune and great ice cream. We raised just about \$3,000.00 for the Sanctuary Renovation Fund, with a little help from our friends at Thrivent Financial for Lutherans.

When our phone callers began their telephone pledge campaign, we were already well on our way to the goal of \$23,900.00, which we set with our Congregational Meeting in May. In fact, several members had already donated very generously to the Sanctuary Renovation Fund, and our balance stood at well over \$18,000.00. Our callers called, and even more generosity poured in. Brian Walters, Jayne Schrader, and Charlie Danner raised another \$11,000-plus through their one week of calling. Can you believe it?! Of course, you can. That's who Zion is. That's what the folks at Zion do, namely, support the church, and, more specifically, support the folks who are working hard to help our church to thrive. That's what our phone callers heard on their telephone calls. That's what we saw with the sale of Carol's bracelets. That's what has been so evident with giving for the Sanctuary Renovation Fund, which now stands a tad above \$30,000!

Oh, don't get me wrong. We still have our challenges. While our support for the Operating Budget has been strong throughout the year, we continue to carry that \$6,400 deficit, which we incurred with the hefty heating bills and snow plowing expenses that hit in January, February, and March. Now, with the start of the new program year, we are hoping to put that lingering deficit to rest. That's our goal for the last four months of the year. We trust that, with God's grace and your generosity, September will prove to be the first of several months that show that deficit moving toward a year-end surplus. Thank you Zion, for all you do and all you give in support of the work of our church and in support of the cause of God's kingdom.

In His service, and yours,  
Pastor Sherwindt

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## **AND NOW, A WORD FROM OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR**

Summer is coming to an end, school has begun, and that means that the music program at Zion will soon kick into high gear! Once the Labor Day weekend is over, it is time to get the calendars ready for rehearsals to begin. The Senior Choir will begin rehearsing in the Choir Room on Wednesday, September 5, from 7:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. They will again sing at the early service on three Sundays each month, beginning September 16. The vocal leadership they provide, as well as the musical offering that they sing as an anthem, are vital elements of the early service, and are something for which the entire congregation should be very appreciative. As I have said MANY times before, *we have lots of room in the choir for new members*. Try to resist the urge to think upon reading this as *if she is talking about someone else joining the choir, not me*. As committed members of a growing and healthy congregation, it is our obligation and privilege to say *Yes* to invitations to participate. A degree in music is not required to join the choir. Several years of experience singing in professional groups is not required to join the choir. Possessing the voice of Luciano Pavarotti is not required to join the choir. A love of praising God through song is required! The opportunity to enjoy fellowship with some of Zion's friendliest and most welcoming members for one hour each week and on Sunday mornings is a benefit. Taking advantage of yet another opportunity to jump in and help our church grow and become healthier by participating instead of watching, is a gift. Please consider, twice, becoming a member of Zion's choir. You will be glad that you did.

The Praise Team will begin rehearsing on Wednesday evenings from 6:15 p.m. to 7:20 p.m. on September 5. The congregation at the late service has enjoyed the vocal leadership of the Praise Team throughout the summer months, and this will certainly continue as our program year gets underway. Members can expect to hear and learn some very beautiful and inspirational new songs, as well as some favorites that we already know well. May I say once again how honored I feel to work with these groups. The Senior Choir and the Praise Team are both composed of highly committed and talented individuals who have the courage to say *Yes* to invitations to participate. It humbles me to look at them and realize just how many people have made Zion's health a high priority in their own lives.

Zion's children's choirs will begin meeting on Sunday, September 16, beginning at 9:10 a.m. I am taking a slightly different approach with the children this year and grouping them according to age. Group One will consist of our youngest singers, from age three through the first grade. This group will meet with me in the choir room from 9:10 a.m. to 9:20 a.m., and they will sing their "anthem" once every other month at the late service. Group Two will be made up of the second through sixth graders, and they will meet with me from 9:20 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. in the Choir Room. They, too, will prepare and sing an anthem once every other month alternately with the younger children's choir. This makes for a very tight schedule on Sunday mornings. Please take note of the beginning times so that we can get lots of singing accomplished. I look forward to a wonderfully blessed year working with the musical organizations at Zion. We are a lucky group of people to have the talent and dedication that we have, and I am very thankful for the opportunity to serve as the groups'

director.

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## STEWARDSHIP NOTES

In 1st Corinthians 16:2, St. Paul encouraged Christ's people to be good stewards with the money God had given them: *“On the first day of every week, each of you is to put aside and save whatever extra money you earn, so that collections need not be taken when I come.”*

Well, it's that time of year again when the children prepare to go back to school and the summer is quickly coming to a close. There's the smell of fall in the air and we're faced with the fact that fall will give way to winter and soon our ground will be covered with snow.

As our church family prepares for that final quarter of the year, we need to be conscious of our nagging General Funds operating budget deficit, and remember that everything we have is a trust from God, given to us to care for and manage.

While we know that everything is going up and everyone wants a bigger piece of the pie, we, as your Stewardship Team, hope that you will do what you can to assist us in the coming months to end the year on a positive note.

Zion has always been a very generous congregation, and we have no doubt that 2007 will be another stellar example of your commitment to doing the good works we have been called to do.

On behalf of our Stewardship Team, I thank you for your support. May God's peace be with you.

Cindy Ferry,

Resource Ministry Elder

Stewardship Team Members:

Steve Ross, Mabel Kolarik,

Brian Kay and Chris Thomas

*Worship Ministry:* Sharon Stout reported that we have received a nice response to our worship survey. We look forward to discussing the results at our next meeting. We will participate in our annual Sunday evening Advent service with St. Paul's Catholic Church on December 9th (at St. Paul's).

*Social Ministry:* We continue to honor (and exceed) our commitments to benevolence. Our goal is to share 15% of General Funds income with the Northeastern Ohio Synod, ELCA Missionary Support, Helping New Orleans Heal, and a host of local ministries ranging from our Food Pantry & Clothing Closet, Campus Ministry, and discretionary assistance. We are well above our goal.

*Parish Life Ministry:* We congratulated Bob Lancashire for the great work he has done in overseeing the North Canton Ministerial Association Co-ed Softball League, and he reported that he is now working on the Sunday Evening Coed Volleyball League.

*Learning Ministry:* Tina Beaber was happy to report on the great success we enjoyed with Vacation Bible School. Registration, participation, volunteer assistance, crafts, food, music, recreation, and learning in the classroom: everything went beautifully. We now look forward to Rally Day (on September 9th) and the new Sunday School year.

*Witness Ministry:* The Sunday Brunch Bunch will meet next on Sunday, September 23. We continue to work on our use of brochures and visitor packets, as well as improving our use of free publicity and paid advertising.

*Property Ministry:* Trustees have focused their attention most recently on repairing leaks in the roof above the Sanctuary and one of our classrooms in the Education wing.

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## **CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS**

Carol Rossbach called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members in attendance were Jayne Schrader, Dave Palumbo, Cindy Ferry, Betty Tracy, Bob Lancashire, Tina Beaber, Mary Humbert, Pastor Sherwindt. Mutual Ministry was ready to get the budget process moving with personnel reviews and compensation recommendations for 2008. In short, we feel that Zion is on the road to becoming a healthy church, and we are confident that Pastor Sherwindt's leadership skills will assist in helping us progress toward that goal. We are especially appreciative of the superb service offered by our Music Director (Suzanne Walters), Nursery Attendant (Miriam Keating), Church Office Secretary (Diane Dunphy), and Custodian (Tim Himebaugh).

The Treasurer's Report noted that income was strong during the five Sunday month of July, with expenses in line with the budget, leaving the operating budget deficit exactly where it was at the end of March, right around \$6,400. Vacation Bible School was funded mostly through special donations and daily offerings, with total expenses of \$2,733 and various income streams amounting to \$2,616. Giving for the Sanctuary Renovation Fund remains strong, without any visible impact on regular offerings, which is a good thing.

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## **CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

The Adult Class on Sunday morning has had a great time working through the Martin Marty book *Lutheran Questions & Lutheran Answers*. Jim Fidler, Charlie Danner, and Carol Rossbach have done a great job in preparing for some lively and enlightening discussions about our uniquely Lutheran perspective on the Christian faith and our Christian life. Summer attendance has been nothing short of phenomenal, a sign of how enjoyable these classes have been. We'll be sticking with Martin Marty through September. Feel free to join in the fun of our Sunday morning round table discussions.

Previewing Phil Yancey's book *Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?* has created interest

among our members and inspiration within the small group which has been reading through its light-hearted anecdotes and down-to-earth insights about the value of prayer. Prayer makes a difference, not because it serves as a means to something we want, but because it helps us become what God wants. We haven't yet decided on the best format for moving ahead with a group that's focused on learning about prayer, and developing a love for it; but there is no doubt about the interest. We'll have more to say about this at Zion's Ministry Fair on Rally Day, September 9th.

**Calling All Parents:** Please help your children fill out the Youth Spotlight Form, which is included in this newsletter. If you have more than one child, additional copies of the form are available in the Church Office. We'll have plenty available on Rally Day! We would like forms for all of Zion's children, ages 1 to 18. We'll begin our Spotlight Page again in the October Newsletter. I know the Zion Family looks forward to reading about our amazing youth! Please return completed forms to Debbie Fox by Sunday, September 23.

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## **GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL**

### **Upcoming Events - Mark your calendars!**

**Sunday, September 2:** No Sunday School scheduled for Labor Day Weekend

**Sunday, September 9:** Rally Day, Rally Day, Rally Day! 9:15 a.m. to 10:15 a.m.

**Sunday, September 16:** Children's Choir Practice resumes! 9:10 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.

**Sunday, September 16:** The 2007-08 Sunday School Year begins today, 9:30 a.m.

**Saturday, October 20:** Youth Missions Fall Craft Show, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

### **Rally Day and our Hawaiian Luau & Pig Roast**

Rally Day will be Sunday, September 9. This is going to be a great day filled with fun and fellowship! We will start off at 9:15 a.m. with our Ministry Fair in Luther Hall. There will also be music, food, and games for our Sunday School kids. After our 10:30 a.m. worship service, the Men of Zion will host our Second Annual Hawaiian Luau & Pig Roast. There are many activities planned for the day, including the dunk tank, relay races, games, face painting, volleyball, limbo contests, hula hoop contests, crafts and much more. We will see you on September 9th as we kick off the new Sunday School year and have an awesome day!

### **Zion's New Sunday School Year**

We are always looking for volunteers to help with teaching and leading our Sunday School classes, all the way from Pre-Kindergarten through the High School class. If you are interested in being a teacher, a classroom helper, or a substitute for these positions, please contact Debbie Fox at 330-966-2433. No doubt about it! This is such a rewarding and enjoyable opportunity to share God's love and His Word with Zion's Youth that you will be glad that you made that call!

### **Pre-K through the Sixth Grade**

We are looking forward to Rally Day and the start of the new Sunday School Year! We have a year of great lessons and activities planned, along with our Christmas and Easter programs. We will also have our traditional Halloween Party, service projects at Thanksgiving and Christmas, along with other fun events this year! Our children's classes are for kids age 3 through 6th grade. This year's teachers are Melissa Riffle and Vicki Givler in Pre-K, Connie Riffle in Kindergarten and 1st Grade, Janet Sleese in 2nd and 3rd Grades, and Tina Beaber in 4th, 5th, and 6th Grades. We are looking forward to a year full of fun and learning - see you on September 16th!

### **Zion's Children's Choir Begins, and with a New Wrinkle**

We are starting something new with the Children's Choir this year. Our children will practice in two groups. Pre-K through 1st grade will form one group, and 2nd through 6th grade will form a second group. Practice will start Sunday, September 16, in the choir room. The first group, Pre-K through 1st grade, will practice from 9:10 a.m. to 9:20 a.m., and the second

group, 2nd through 6th grade, will practice from 9:20 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. The children will have practice each Sunday at these times, and then they will go to their Sunday School class. Suzanne Walters will again be leading the Children's Choir. Thank you to Suzanne for all of her time, for her wonderful commitment, and for the great job she does with our children and their voices!

#### Confirmation Instruction and the High School Class

Our Confirmation class will start again on Sunday, September 16, at 9:15 a.m. in the Resource Center. This class is for all 7th and 8th graders. Renee Schrader will again lead our Confirmation program. We will be studying the Hear We Stand Confirmation program. We've got a good class, a fabulous instructor, and we're looking forward to another great year.

The High School class will also start up Sunday, September 16, at 9:15 a.m. We have planned a curriculum of interesting and relevant topics for this group, along with getting an early start on preparing for the Bible Bowl this year! The teachers are excited about the possibilities, and our youth should have a great time getting to know more about the Bible and one another.

#### Fall Oktoberfest Youth Missions Craft Shows News

The Youth Missions Craft Show will be here before we know it, so we are planning to start working on the youth's projects this month. We will once again put together raffle baskets for each of the Sunday School classes. We will assign each class their theme on Sunday, September 16, and would like all items to be donated for the baskets by Sunday, September 30. Tickets for these baskets will go on sale the first Sunday in October. We will also start working on the craft projects that the youth will sell at the Craft Show. We will talk more about these matters at the Youth Ministry Meeting, which is set for Tuesday, September 4, at 7:30 p.m.

#### ACME Receipts

It is that time of year again! We will begin collecting Acme Receipts in September. This year we will receive cash back credit for receipts dated September 29, 2007 through February 16, 2008. Please be sure your receipt has the "Community Cash Back" amount at the bottom. By September's end there will be collection cans in Memorial Hall by the coffee on Sunday mornings, and in the Church Office. Please save your receipts and help us raise money for our youth! Thank you in advance for your great support!

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## CHURCHWIDE ASSEMBLY

The ELCA had its Tenth Biennial Assembly in Chicago, August 6-11. The Rev. Mark Hanson, 60, was elected to serve a second six-year term as presiding bishop. Bishop Hanson was re-elected on the second ballot with 888 votes of the 1,029 cast. Seventy-five percent of the ballots cast are required for election on the second ballot. He fell two votes short of being re-elected on the first or nominating ballot. He begins his second term November 1. Bishop Hanson also serves as president of the Lutheran World Federation, a position to which he was elected in 2003, and will serve in that role until 2010.

**Ecumenical News:** While there was no comment on recent statements by Pope Benedict reiterating the Roman Catholic position that Lutherans (and other Protestant denominations) are not true churches in the full sense of the term, voting members extended our full communion relationship with the Moravian Church in America to the East/West Indies and the Alaska Provinces of the Moravian Church in America by a vote of 999 to 23. The 1999 Churchwide Assembly adopted a proposal for full communion with the Northern and Southern Provinces of the Moravian Church in America.

**The War on Terror in Iraq:** Voting members declared their opposition to "any escalation of the war" in Iraq and asked this church to call on our government to "take immediate and comprehensive steps to end the violence and establish a peaceful, stable, and just society in that country." [How establishing a peaceful, stable, and just society in Iraq can occur without a

government in Iraq gaining a monopoly over the use of violent force within its borders, remains a mystery unaddressed by the language of the resolution.]

**The ELCA and Sexuality:** The Churchwide Assembly chose to make no changes to ELCA standards for professional leaders, which requires that rostered leaders refrain from homosexual conduct. However, by a vote of 538 to 431, the assembly asked its synods and bishops to “refrain from or demonstrate restraint in disciplining” people and congregations that extend and affirm a call to otherwise qualified candidates who are in mutual, chaste and faithful committed same-gender relationships, and it called for restraint in disciplining rostered leaders in committed same-gender relationships. An explanation was required following these seemingly inconsistent actions. In response, Bishop Hanson said, “These are words of counsel. They are not words that change the standards of the church. They reflect the mind of this assembly as it seeks to give counsel to the leaders of this church.”

In what may have been a related matter, the assembly endorsed **Book of Faith: Lutherans Read the Bible**, a five-year initiative to promote study of the Bible. The initiative grew out of a proposal the North Carolina Synod made to the 2005 Churchwide Assembly, which stressed the importance of Scripture for believers “throughout the ages.” It was adopted by a vote of 1,000 to 19. A companion recommendation, which was adopted 956 to 68, gave specific suggestions for ways to “invite and encourage all members, expressions, institutions and partners of this church to commit themselves regularly and increasingly to hearing, reading, studying, sharing and being formed by God's Word.” We continue to prepare for the presentation of a **Social Statement on Human Sexuality**, which is anticipated for the 2009 Churchwide Assembly in Minneapolis.

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## **MEN OF ZION NEWS**

Zion's Congregational Pig Roast is on for Sunday, September 9th! This is the event that announces the kickoff to the new Sunday School year, the new choral year, and another program year of good fun, great food, and unforgettable fellowship. Y'all come now, and invite your friends and neighbors. There will be plenty for everyone. Once again, we organized into teams, with five team leaders, and plenty of men randomly assigned to each team. Our team leaders are Mark Votaw (adult games and activities), Brian Walters (decorations), Dale Jacobs (kitchen crew), Jim Fidler (clean-up crew), and Charlie Danner (the drinks team).

The Men of Zion will take care of the main menu, which consists of roast pork, pork loins, chicken, hotdogs, potato salad, cole slaw, and baked beans. We've also drafted Betty Tracy to help organize folks to bring desserts, sides, and salads. Debbie Fox is already on-board organizing games for the kids. We know you'll have fun, lots of fun, with great food. So, make sure you join us.

August was a time for celebrating some great successes with our summer activities - the mission trip to New Orleans, our wine-tasting with dinner, the golf outing with Lutheran Men in Mission, Vacation Bible School, a couple of work days. We enjoyed Jim Fidler's reflections on a life of service with the FBI. We also took some time to think about the Hawaiian Luau & Pig Roast. Everything is in the works. We're ready to go. We're hoping that you will join us.

Our next meeting is Wednesday, September 5th, in Luther Hall at 6:00 p.m., when we will put the finishing touches on our plans for an unbelievably delicious Congregational Pig Roast. All men are encouraged to attend.

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## THE WOMEN OF ZION

The monthly Bible study for the Women of Zion meets on the third Tuesday, September 18, when we will start a nine-month Bible study, **Blessed to Follow: The Beatitudes as a Compass for Discipleship**. Martha E. Stortz, Professor of Historical Theology and Ethics at Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary, wrote the study guide, which seeks to assist women in their study of Jesus' first big sermon in Matthew, which begins with the beatitudes. Dr. Stortz reminds us that in the Gospel of Matthew, the words out of Jesus' mouth is blessed. What does it mean to be blessed? What does it mean to be a blessing? Join us on September 18th at 9:30 a.m. to find out more about what this meant for Jesus and what this can mean for us.

The Chancel Guild will meet for our annual Fall Cleaning, a discipline that focuses on polishing the brass and attending to what it takes to keep our Sanctuary looking its best. The day is Tuesday, September 11, with our meeting beginning at 6:30 p.m., and our cleaning to follow at 7:00 p.m. There's much to do. We look forward to a strong turnout.

Blanket Sunday is Sunday, October 7th, and Zion's Comfort Givers are asking that all of us keep watch for a good deal on a blanket. Then, make sure to add it to our collection. The blankets are boxed, driven to Jerusalem Lutheran Church in Seville, where they are shipped by Lutheran World Relief around the world. While we're thinking about Blanket Sunday and LWR, let's keep in mind that we are collecting for Health Kits and School Kits. The items we need are rulers, blunt scissors, construction paper for the School Kits, along with hand towels, tooth brushes, combs (no rat tails) for the Health Kits. Look for sales. Cash donations are welcome.

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## SEPTEMBER SENIOR BIRTHDAYS



Happy Birthday to:

**Mike Babich**

**September 4**

**Jan Meyer**

**September 6**

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## **SEPTEMBER ANNIVERSARIES**

Happy Anniversary to:

<b>John &amp; Virginia Long</b>	<b>September 3</b>
<b>Drew &amp; Beth Heller</b>	<b>September 3</b>
<b>Bill &amp; Peggy Leed</b>	<b>September 7</b>
<b>Calvin &amp; Mary Shunk</b>	<b>September 20</b>
<b>Sam &amp; Beth Shaheen</b>	<b>September 21</b>
<b>Jim &amp; Betty Boettler</b>	<b>September 22</b>
<b>Doug &amp; Lisa Roman</b>	<b>September 30</b>

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## **THANK YOU'S TO ZION**

**Dear members of Zion,**

**Thank you. I want to take this opportunity to thank everyone who prayed for me, sent me cards, called and visited me in the hospital, during rehab, and at home. I am doing well and hope to be back very soon. I also want to thank everyone for the prayers and concerns for my granddaughter Jessy, who is fighting cancer. She is now in the Cleveland Clinic, and we are hopeful that bone marrow transplants will pave the way to a full recovery. Thank you, again, for everything.**

**Bless you all,  
Patty Stayer**

**Dear volunteers at the Food Pantry,**

**Your services have been very helpful in my time of need. My five-year-old grandson loved the new book bag he received in August. I want to thank you for the food and miscellane-ous items we have received.**

**Sincerely,  
Mrs. Zarlengo**

**Pastor Sherwindt and members at Zion,**

**On behalf of Senior Choir members, I want to thank you for the generous gift of that wonderful Sunday brunch in July, served by Benjamin's Grille in the Lodge at Faircrest (which is the site of the old Hoover Farm).**

**Personally speaking, let me simply say that I admire the time and efforts you have put into making Zion a very healthy and congenial congregation. We are so blessed!**

**Finally, I would like to thank everyone at Zion who prayed for my daughter Susan when she injured her playing arm. She was blessed with a full recovery and is now back to work [in the heart of Missouri as a professional violinist].**

**Heartfelt thanks,  
Flo Jensen**

**Dear Pastor Sherwindt,**

**Thank you so much for your presence in our lives this past month as our entire family struggles with the passing of Melinda. Your prayers and counsel meant so much to us during our sad and difficult time. We also deeply appreciated your kindness and flexibility as you honored our request to allow Pr. Brian Nutt to participate in the church service at Zion. On behalf of our entire familv - Don. Sr. and Shirl. Don. Jr. and Heather. Susie and Tom. Beckv and Steve -**

thank you from the bottom of our hearts for every thoughtful word, gesture, and blessing you bestowed upon all of us this month.

Sincerely,  
Rebecca Volkmann

[A Celebration of Life Service for Melinda took place at Zion on August 14. See the next page for excerpts from the funeral sermon.]

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## **IN LOVING MEMORY OF MELINDA HERTLER**

In Loving Memory of Melinda Hertler  
January 6, 1958 - August 11, 2007

“I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills. From whence cometh my help?” [Psalm 121:1] I have found myself on more than a few occasions in the company of the Hertlers in hospital waiting rooms while surgeons worked and we waited. Not surprisingly, we often talked about football. Okay, we always talked about football. But one of the things that never surprised me, and always impressed me, was discovering what a wonderfully supportive, sensitive, caring, and inclusive family this is. What love they shared, and inspired, which was so obvious with the many friends who joined them then, and have joined them now with the service today. The truth of the matter is that you cannot spend time with the Hertlers without knowing that this is a family of doers. These are people with a plan. They are focused on understanding what just happened, and looking to be ready for what's about to happen. It's non-stop. It's a way of life. It's their joy in life. Let's get it done, and they do; and they are so good at it.

So, there we were in the hospital, still trying to understand what had just happened from the time when Melinda herself described the surgery she was about to undergo on Wednesday morning to the sight of tubes and technology keeping her alive on Friday night. “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills. From whence cometh my help?” What a feeling of helplessness, standing before all those tubes and wires, all of those complicated gauges and electronic gizmos! Think about it! A young woman of forty-nine, bright, funny, accomplished, whether it was teaching at Hammel, or the Akron Institute, or Walsh University, or working in business as an administrator at Summa in Akron, or the Cleveland Clinic, Melinda loved people. She loved serving. She loved lending a hand and making things better. And then suddenly, inexplicably, and tragically, everything changed; and there we were shaking our heads, wondering silently, “I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills. From whence cometh my help?”

Then there's the next line. “Our help comes from the Lord, who created the heavens and the earth.” That, too, is a powerful line, one we all believe. There are many ways to respond to the momentum of bad news and difficult decisions. With the Hertlers, it wasn't so much a sense of resignation, but a statement of resolve that shaped their response as they sat together in the waiting room, drawing close but remaining open and inclusive, clear on the task at hand, and resolved to respond together, without leaving anyone behind, or anyone alone. Faith ... as a family: that's what I saw. What a privilege, as a pastor and a friend, to be included as a part of their pulling together to form their response to developments that were truly unwelcome and unwanted. Melinda grew up with that, that reality of family, that sense of trust in the love they shared, the fun they had, the faith that never wavered but fed the strength with which they learned to live. They were quite a team.

You know, to be effective as a team you probably don't have to “love” the people you're with; but these folks surely do, and that was so evident in the room where we gathered, and prayed, and talked through the tough questions that were raised with Melinda's worsening outlook. The answer to their questions, and to the Psalmist's plea, was obvious: faith in God and love for one another. That's where our help comes from, and that's what our help is. Again, Melinda knew this love, and none in that room at Mercy, and none in this room at Zion, ever doubted or

**wavered in the sense of assurance that comes from this love, trusting that the love that helped us make our way through this life will pave the way into the next life as well.**

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