

December 2007 Newsletter

A WORD FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear members and friends of Zion,

With the long Thanksgiving weekend still fresh in my mind, and the taste of the delicious feast we call Thanksgiving dinner still so close that I can taste the turkey and stuffing with gravy, not to mention the tradition of pumpkin pie with freshly whipped cream, it is just an added extra that I can still hear the refrain from the psalm with which we opened our Thanksgiving Eve Service ringing in my ears and reminding me of the gratitude that fills my heart. "O give thanks to the Lord for He is good, and His steadfast love endures forever!" That sentiment is repeated throughout Psalm 136, and throughout the course of our lives as well. "O give thanks to the Lord for He is good, and His steadfast love endures forever!"

What wonderful words, and what a wonderful year we've had at Zion. We have enjoyed some heart-warming successes, like last week's Thanksgiving Give-away, 75 turkeys, with all the trimmings, and more. We've enjoyed some life-changing successes, like Helping New Orleans Heal, Part 2. We've enjoyed the usual successes, like Vacation Bible School and the Craft Show, and some surprising successes, like our fundraising efforts for our Sanctuary Renovation Fund. "O give thanks to the Lord for He is good, and His steadfast love endures forever!"

It has been a very good year, and the year is not yet over. We still have a good deal of work to do. The Advent season awaits, with four wonderful Sunday Evening Services planned for December. Dinner is served at 5:30 p.m., with worship at 6:15 p.m. On December 2nd we will tell The Story of our Lord's Birth through Chrismons, the gold-and-white symbols that decorate our tree, and we'll all make a chrismon to take home with us! Then, on December 9th we are invited to join our partners at St. Paul's Catholic Church for a wonderful common meal at 5:30 p.m., followed by a Service of Evening Prayer, with music prepared by our Praise Team and St. Paul's Instruments of Christ. I will offer a brief message on the topic of Christian Service-Lutheran Style. On December 16th we're back at Zion for a Service of Lessons & Carols, which means lots of special music offered by Zion's many talented members. And on December 23rd Carole Singer will be our guide as we celebrate Carols from around the World.

All of our Advent services lead to their climax with Christmas Eve and Christmas. There is so much to do in December! The Advent Giving Tree decorates our Narthex. The children of Zion are preparing their Christmas Program for the 10:30 a.m. service on December 16th. We are inviting members to bake cookies to go with the Christmas dinners we are sharing with the families we serve through our Food Pantry & Clothing Closet. Everything we do in December is intended to find its fulfillment in the celebration of Christ's birth, the sole focus of our worship services on Christmas Eve. What a wonderful way to give thanks for a wonderful year!

The Sanctuary will look beautiful. The Senior Choir, the Children's Choir, and Zion's Praise Team will offer heart-warming, uplifting anthems. The pipe organ will be in its glory. The songs, the message, holy communion, the candle-light ending: how can you not want to make sure that you are here, offering your thanks and praise for all that our Lord has done to reveal a love that conquers our fears, filling us with hope, and empowering us to live the kind of lives God's grace makes possible. It all begins with Christmas. I hope December finds you well, and

here, for a busy month of worship and service ... and all to the glory of God.

In His service, and yours,
Pastor Sherwindt

A QUICK LOOK AT THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The First Sunday in Advent: Gathering as Families around Chrismons

Sunday, December 2, 8:00 a.m.: Our Traditional Service, with Fred Locker as Organist
Sunday, December 2, 10:30 a.m.: Our Blended Service, with our Children's Choir singing
Sunday, December 2, 5:30 p.m.: Our First Advent Dinner hosted by the Chancel Guild
Sunday, December 2, 6:00 p.m.: Our Family Craft invites everyone to make a Chrismon
Sunday, December 2, 6:30 p.m.: Telling the Story of Christ's Birth through Chrismons

[The First Sunday Evening Advent Service focuses on a family craft that all of us can enjoy. Carol Rossbach has honed the process of inviting all who join us to make a chrismon for home use. Come to enjoy the story and the sight of chrismons adorning our Christmas Tree at Zion.]

The Second Sunday in Advent: An Ecumenical Evening at St. Paul's

Sunday, December 9, 8:00 a.m.: Our Traditional Service, with the Senior Choir singing
Sunday, December 9, 10:30 a.m.: Our Blended Service, led by Zion's Praise Team
Sunday, December 9, 5:30 p.m.: We Are Invited to St. Paul's for our Advent Dinner
Sunday, December 9, 6:30 p.m.: Our Service of Evening Prayer is hosted by St. Paul's

[Our evening program continues a strong tradition of ecumenical partnership between St. Paul's and Zion. The Praise Team from Zion and St. Paul's Instruments of Christ will offer a program of Special Music. Fr. Jay Clarke will preside, and Pastor Sherwindt will offer a brief message on the theme of Christian Service-Lutheran Style. Everyone who joins us is invited to bring an item that can be donated to Zion's Food Pantry, another expression of partnership in service.]

The Third Sunday in Advent: Zion's Family Celebrates the Gift of Music

Sunday, December 16, 8:00 a.m.: Our Traditional Service, with the Senior Choir singing
Sunday, December 16, 10:30 a.m.: Children's Christmas Program, The Road to Christmas
Sunday, December 16, 5:30 p.m.: Our Third Advent Dinner hosted by the Men of Zion
Sunday, December 16, 6:15 p.m.: A Service of Lessons & Carols at Zion - You'll love it!

The Fourth Sunday in Advent: Singing Carols from around the World

Sunday, December 23, 8:00 a.m.: Our Traditional Service, with the Senior Choir singing

Sunday, December 23, 10:30 a.m.: Our Blended Service, led by Zion's Praise Team

Sunday, December 23, 5:30 p.m.: Our Fourth Advent Dinner hosted by the Youth of Zion

Sunday, December 23, 6:15 p.m.: Carole Singer's Christmas Carols from around the World

Our Christmas Eve Schedule at Zion: Two Services, 6:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

Monday, December 24, 6:00 p.m.: Our Family-Friendly Service, with special music by the children of Zion and by the Children's Choir, plus our Carol Setting for Holy Communion.

Monday, December 24, 8:00 p.m.: Special Music offered by our many talented members

Monday, December 24, 8:30 p.m.: Our Traditional Candle-Light Service, with Zion's Senior Choir singing, as well as our special Christmas Carol Setting for Holy Communion

CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

Carol Rossbach called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Members in attendance were Jayne Schrader, Dave Palumbo, Tina Beaber, Chris Thomas, Mary Humbert, Steve Ross, Betty Tracy and Pastor Sherwindt. Mark Votaw and Bob Lancashire were absent. After basking in the good news of October, which boasted a successful Craft Show and a very productive Congregational Meeting, our business turned to the challenge on raising awareness about the need to end the year without an operating budget deficit.

The Treasurer's Report for October displayed some impressive figures for overall income, almost \$24,000; but only \$16,997 of that was given to cover our operating expenses. The Youth Fund raised close to \$5,000; the Sanctuary Fund received \$1,500; and other gifts were given to the Memorial Fund. So, while Total Income for the year is looking good, General Fund Income for the year - offerings that cover our Operating Budget - has fallen \$3,479 short of our expenses. That's not a crisis. In fact, it's a little better than this time last year; but it leaves us short, with a substantial but surmountable challenge as we head toward the end the year

STEWARDSHIP NEWS

Our stewardship program earlier in the year revealed that when it comes to giving, Zion's members want to know that we need your gifts to reach our goals and pay our bills. Well, this year should put that formula to the test, since we will need your generous offerings during December to put our pesky deficit to rest, and wind up the year in the black. There is no doubt that we can do that, and that we should. Why? Because we have been richly blessed, abundantly so, and because Zion is worth it, and because we believe in what God is trying to do

through us.

We should all be proud of the ambitious goals we have set and the faithful effort we have offered. Our ministry of Christian service - whether it be the ministry of learning, or serving, the praise of worship, or the joy of fellowship - our ministry is surely deserving of the time so many have invested, the talents so many have dedicated, and the treasures so many have so generously given. We are doing great things here through the many programs that lift up Christ's love by tending to the needs of our neighbors. Paying the bills is just part of the cost of trusting God's grace and living Christ's love.

I am sure that you recall the story in John's Gospel about the wedding at Cana, where, with Jesus' touch, water was turned into wine, and the wedding party was praised for saving the best for last. That is what we will need here at Zion in December. We will need Jesus' touch, reaching into each heart and every home, inspiring the best of our giving for the last month of the year. We will need all the generosity we can muster to end the year on a note that signals our faith in God's call and confidence in Zion's mission. We hope we've saved the best for last, and that together we can finish the year with a flourish

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GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

Upcoming Events - Mark your calendars!

Sunday, December 2nd: Children's Choir Group #2 (2nd- 6th) sings at 10:30 a.m. Service

Sunday, December 2nd: Children's Christmas Program Practice during Sunday School

Sunday, December 2nd: Advent Chrismon Craft & Service begins with dinner at 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, December 9th: Children's Christmas Program Practice during Sunday School

Saturday, December 15: Pizza Party before our Program Rehearsal begins at 12:00 p.m.

Saturday, December 15: Children's Christmas Program Dress Rehearsal follows Pizza Party

Saturday, December 15: Gift Wrapping from the Advent Giving Tree follows Rehearsal

Sunday, December 16: The Children's Christmas Program at the 10:30 a.m. Service only

Sunday, December 16: Children's Choir and Ensembles sing at our Lessons & Carols Service

Monday, December 24: Children's Choir sings at Family-friendly Christmas Eve Service

Pre-K through the Sixth Grade

The month of December will be devoted to Play Practice and the Christmas Story. This year's program is called The Road to Christmas. This program will answer a couple of key questions. How do we get to Christmas? What signs will there be? Practice will be during Sunday School through December 16. Dress Rehearsal will be Saturday, December 15, at 12:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. We will have a Pizza Party first to celebrate the kids' hard work, and then we will practice. The kids are also invited to stay and help wrap the Giving Tree gifts after rehearsal. Our older youth will be joining us for pizza and gift wrapping. We will resume our normal Children's Choir and Sunday School schedule on Sunday, December 23. Thanks for your attention and support.

The Children's Choir Anthem Schedule - offered at the 10:30 a.m. Service:

Sunday, December 2: Group #2: Rejoice in the Lord Always

Sunday, December 16: The Road to Christmas at 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, January 13: Group #1: We Were Made to Love the Lord

Sunday, February 3: Group #2: Sing, Shout, Clap

Sunday, March 2: Group #1: Praise Him

3rd Sunday of Easter Sunday, April 6: Group #2: Amen

7th Sunday of Easter Sunday, May 4: Group #1: All Night, All Day

Mother's Day 2008 Sunday, May 11: Group #2: Pass It On

Season of Pentecost Sunday, June 1: Group #1: Butterfly Song

Thank You to Our Youth for the Thanksgiving Service Project

Thank you to all of our youth for the great job they did decorating this year's Thanksgiving bags for the Siffrin Group Homes in our community. Youth from ages 3 through 18 decorated thirty-two grocery bags for this project, and then helped to fill those bags after church on Sunday, November 18! We had a great service event that day with food, fun and fellowship, along with a lot of hard work! The kids also did a great job sorting the massive amount of food we received for the Food Pantry from a scavenger hunt conducted by the youth of St. Paul's Catholic Church. A big Thank You also goes out to volunteers from the Food Pantry and to our youth leaders, too, for their help. It was a great day and a great project.

It's on to our Advent Giving Tree and the Season of Christmas

The Youth of Zion are again sponsoring a Giving Tree this Christmas for several families in our community who are in need. The Advent Giving Tree, which is located in the Narthex, has tags with gift suggestions for these families. We are also hoping to help all of our food pantry families with Christmas dinner this year, and we have placed tags on the tree for a \$25 donation, which will cover our cost for Christmas dinner. You are invited to take one, or more, of the tags, purchase the item, and then bring the gift, unwrapped (with the giving tag attached), to church by Friday, December 14. Our youth will be getting together here at the church on Saturday, December 15, at 12:00 p.m. to have pizza and to wrap the Giving Tree gifts, which we plan to deliver to the families before Christmas Day. Please help our youth to help these families have a Merry Christmas. It's a great way to share God's love through serving others.

We are also trying something new this year as a way to help our Food Pantry families and our shut-ins enjoy Christmas. We are asking our willing bakers to bake 6 to 8 dozen cookies to share with these families. There will be a sign-up sheet available in Luther Hall, or you can contact Debbie Fox if you are willing to bake for this project. We are asking anyone who is interested to please sign up and indicate the type of cookies you will make so that we can have a variety. We will need these cookies by the weekend of December 15-16, so that we can include them with the holiday treats we distribute to the pantry families on Tuesday, December 18. We felt this would be another great way to share the love and joy of the Christmas season!

Thank You from our Youth: Two New Trees for Zion!

As a gift to the congregation, the Youth of Zion have purchased and will plant two new trees on our property. You can see these two beautiful Blue Spruce Pines in pots outside the Luther Hall entrance. It's our way of saying thank you for all of your wonderful support throughout the year!

THANK YOU'S TO ZION

To Zion Lutheran's Church Members,

We would like to thank you very much for all the wonderful food you gave us for the holidays. I work for a woman who has special needs and really needed the food badly. It was really nice of you to share so generously. So, now we call all of you little angels. Again, thank you very much for the picture of the Food Pantry Crew. Thanks again

**God bless you all,
Susan Lenart and Valerie Hill**

To Zion's Food Pantry Volunteers,

Just a kind word of thanks for everything that you've done for my family. Special thanks to the lady in the Clothing Closet. She was able to obtain boys clothes for both my three-year-old and five-year-old.

**Sincerely,
Mrs. Zarlingo**

Pastor Sherwindt and Members of Zion,

Thank you so much being our worship leader and allowing us to have the closing worship service of the Church Women's Convention at your church. It was indeed a busy day at Zion, with the Youth Missions Craft Show providing an unexpected opportunity for church women to do some holiday shopping!

The Northeastern Ohio Synodical Women's Organization is most appreciative of your leadership and kindness for all that you did for our Saturday service. The setting, the music, the time and care taken to prepare with us for the service - for all of this and more, thanks!

**Sincerely,
Dottie Hansen
NEOSWO Treasurer**

To Zion's Member & Food Pantry Crew,

Thank you so much for the wonderful Thanksgiving gift of food. It was so appreciated here at our home. It's nice to know that others care for the less fortunate. We are grateful to all of you.

**God blessings from Siffrin Inc.,
Greg, Mark, Dan, and Dan, and staff,
Michelle, Donna, Tami, Barb, and Charles**

To all of the Women of Zion -

I would like to thank all the ladies who helped out with our Thankoffering Service on Sunday, November 18. Your efforts were very much appreciated, as were the many Thankoffering envelopes that will help with the ministries of the Women of the ELCA.

Mabel Snyder

WHAT ABOUT THE BOILER?

We know all about the problems we face with the boiler. It's close to fifty years old. It's sprouting underground leaks. Its pumps are breaking down, and its reliability is suspect. If it weren't for Chris Thomas spending 15 hours a week nursing it through its regular crises, we might not have the time we do to plan for its replacement. Fortunately, our Boiler Task Force -

Jim Fidler, Chris Thomas, Carol Rossbach, Charlie Danner, Mark Votaw, Laura Thompson, and John Brokloff- is making progress in thinking through possible solutions to the kind of heating and cooling systems we would like to install here at Zion for the next fifty years!

We know what the cost would be to replace our present system with one just like it, but that would leave us with a mish-mash of older systems that have many of the same drawbacks we experience now. So, we are looking at a combination of above-ground hot water heat, with some over-head heating and cooling units. Should we replace the units that heat and cool Luther Hall and Memorial Hall? Should we replace the unit that cools the Sanctuary? All of these are older units. Should we install air-conditioning in Senior Independence? What about the education wing? What about the costs involved?

The Boiler Task Force is studying these questions and the five written bids we've received to pull together a plan for heating and cooling our building. We are happy with our ability to analyze and compare these various bids, and we are confident that we will have recommendations ready for Church Council to consider when the new year arrives. We have contingency plans should an emergency arise; but we have confidence in our ability to nurse our present system along until the plan for replacement can be considered, approved, and implemented.

WHAT ABOUT THAT BABY?

With the arrival of Advent, Matthew takes the lead in telling us the story of Jesus' birth. Matthew places his story of Jesus neatly between two bookends that proclaim what Jesus' birth, what Jesus' life means for us. In Matthew 1:23 we learn that our Savior's name is "Immanuel, which means 'God is with us'." In Matthew 28:20 this promise is reaffirmed. "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age...."

"If you build it, they will come," was the promise in the movie Field of Dreams. More important than tourists coming to see a base-ball diamond was the builder's father, who came to play with his son as they had not done years earlier. That's what we see with each of the Sundays in Advent. Our heavenly Father sends his Son, not because he wants to recapture a past with Jesus that was lost, but because he wants to give us a future that means life for us and joy to the world.

That's what the texts in Advent are trying to tell us. Isaiah 11 prophesies of a shoot from the stump of Jesse, who would establish a peaceable kingdom, where the lion shall lie down with the lamb. "The spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord." Isaiah 7 reinforces this promise in announcing that "a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel." That's the bookend with which Matthew begins his story, looking ahead to the arrival of the end of the age, when Jesus "will rule with righteousness for the poor and will judge with equity for the meek of the earth."

This is the story of salvation we'll be hearing about during Advent, and throughout the church year, which follows Matthew's Gospel from birth, through life, to death, and beyond.

THE WOMEN OF ZION

Thankoffering Sunday provided another opportunity for our women to share in the leadership of Zion's worship services as we lifted up ministries that are strengthened through the gifts God has given the Women of the Church. Prayers, litanies, hymns, and the sermon: all highlighted Jesus' vision for a church where differences are not cause for division but evidence of how God enriches us through the diversity of the baptized, each with unique talents, which, when shared, contribute to the good of all. Over \$600 has been collected through our Thankofferings, which we will send to WELCA headquarters in Chicago to assist with ministries that crisscross the nation and span the globe.

The Chancel Guild Christmas Dinner is set for Tuesday, December 11, with a Social Get Together beginning at 6:00 p.m., and dinner served at 6:30 p.m. The menu includes cran-berry salad, Swiss steak, potatoes, green beans with bacon & onions, rolls & butter, a sweet dessert, coffee and tea. Please let Susan Heyard know of your desire to join us, by December 2nd if possible.

All women are invited to join us for our monthly Bible study, which meets in Luther Hall on the 3rd Tuesday, which is December 18th, at 9:30 a.m. We continue our study of the Beatitudes in Matthew, focusing in December on the meek and the mighty. Jesus is the meekness of God made flesh. We will learn from Jesus how to take the "wimp" factor out of meekness. You'll enjoy the con-versation, and we'll be glad that you came.

Please help fill the Sanctuary with the colors of Christmas by purchasing your Christmas poinsettias. The cost is \$9.00 per plant, and we'll need plenty to fill out our poinsettia trees. Orders need to be in by December 16th.

--> THE MEN OF ZION, TOO

The Men of Zion are planning their Second Annual Christmas Prime Rib Dinner, with our Singing Chef doing the honors of serving up thus sumptuous feast on the evening of Wednesday, December 12th, beginning at 6:00 p.m. in Luther Hall. Men are invited to invite their wives for an evening of fine dining and great fun. The menu promises to be exceptionally delicious. Please let Steve Ross (or the Church Office) know of your interest in joining us. We'd love to have you.

The Men of Zion are going to be very active in December. We'll meet on the first Wed-nesday, December 5th, to plan our strategy. On Sunday, December 16th, we will host and serve dinner for the Second Sunday Evening in Advent. During the Lessons & Carols Service that follows dinner, we'll offer a musical moment (of sorts), leaning heavily on the voices of Dale Jacobs, Brian Walters, and Wayne Slease. Then on December 23rd, we will help the Youth of Zion with what promises to be an unforgettable skit having fun with Carols from around the World.

In the meantime, watch for Chris Thomas' call for help with cleaning up the leaves from the yard, from our parking lots, and from the drains along the many roofs that line our building. We're not sure of the date, but we know that there will be plenty of work to go along with a whole lot of fun.

SATURDAY WORSHIP MOVES TO SUNDAY!

With the arrival of Advent and our Sunday Evening Advent Services, we will move our evening option for worship from Saturday at 5:00 p.m. to Sunday at 5:30 p.m. We trust that our Saturday worshipers will appreciate the connection with Sunday, not only for the good food, but also for the greater joy that comes with more of us gathered for worship

THOUGHTFUL AND THANKFUL WORDS FROM THE FOOD PANTRY

Hunger happens all year. It just does not miraculously only happen during the holidays. I become a little irate when the Canton Repository features churches giving away Thanksgiving meals on Thanksgiving Day. I want to write to the churches and the Repository, and yell, "What about the other 11 months!"

As I drove to our Thanksgiving meal this year, I became aware of just how many vehicles there are in some people's driveways, with all the house lights on, highlighting the hurried activity inside. My warm and fuzzy feeling ended abruptly when my thoughts drifted to three little boys. Two weeks ago, I received a call from a teacher in the Plain Local School District. She told me about three of her "babies" - as she often refers to her students - who went without dinner the night before and without breakfast that day. They were very unkempt and wore the same clothes from the day before. They had moved in with their Aunt and her children, because their Momma had been arrested. The Aunt could barely feed her own children, let alone trying to care for three more mouths.

Zion's Food Pantry jumped into action and gave eight grocery bags full of food to their case worker, who then delivered it to the Aunt's house. Through no fault of their own these children had been placed in a position where no child should ever be, where they have to worry about their next meal. How is a child to ever learn in school if they do not have the proper nutrition? In Canton there is a backpack program where food is sent home on Fridays so that the students will have something to eat during their time away from school. That's a program every community should have.

What a sad thought, that these children right here in our community have to deal with such difficult circumstances. We don't have to go overseas to find hunger. It's right here in Stark County. Our starvation here in America may not be caused by drought, but it is here, often due to an individual's poor choices, leaving others vulnerable and in need.

Well, thank God for Zion's Food Pantry. All of the Food Pantry Crew thanks you for your generous support, especially for our Seventh Annual Turkey Giveaway. Without your support for our Food Pantry & Clothing Closet we could not continue feeding folks who in many ways are just like you and me. In addition to the turkeys that were dropped off here at the church, donations totaling in excess of \$900 helped us to purchase everything we needed for our Food Pantry families and the Siffrin Group Homes. There are so many people to thank for the good that we do - the regulars on Tuesdays, the Sunday School, the Youth of Zion, our community churches here in North Canton, for the food they donate, and for the money they give

.

Awesome is the perfect word to describe the Food Pantry Crew. All of us work together toward the goal of feeding the hungry, without hesitation of effort or judgment of others.

Bless all of you,
Shirley Cavender

CELEBRATING GIFTS FROM GOD FOR CHRISTMAS AT ZION

- **Did You Know?** Lynn and Mike Todich, and big brother Michal, were blessed with a beautiful baby girl, Emma Jean, born Friday, November 9th, making Charlie Danner a grandfather for the second time. All are doing well at home, loving every minute of this newfound and unexpected joy!
- **How About That!** Way back in the 1200's, Meister Eckhardt had this to say: "If the only prayer you said in your entire life was "thank you," that would suffice.
- **Did You Know?** When Charles Wesley wrote Hark! The Herald Angels Sing in 1739, he had the angels proclaim: "Glory to the newborn King; peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled!" And what did Wesley think should be the consequences of that message? "Joyful all ye nations rise." The Prince of Peace had come. Light and life to all he brings. Born that we no more may die; born to raise us from the earth, born to give us second birth. Hark! The herald angels sing, Glory to the newborn King!" When Wesley wrote that hymn, England was going through a desperate, hopeless time. Unemployment, poverty, illness, alcoholism and crime were widespread. Wesley and his brother, John, believed that the answer for their nation was Christ's life-changing message. Changed lives would bring a changed nation. Wesley's Christmas song rang true. "Light and life to all he brings." Some historians have written that England didn't have a revolution (as did France) mainly because of the message that Wesleys preached and sang.
- **A Quick Bible Quiz:** Two of the four New Testament Gospels tell in some detail about Jesus' birth. The other two do not. Which two Gospels give the Christmas account? Which two do not?
- **Advent Is Here!** December 2 is the First Sunday of Advent. It is the day when the church officially begins to prepare for Christmas. Advent means "coming," and we make ready for the coming of the Lord. Where should we begin? With ourselves, of course. We should prepare our hearts for Christ to live in them fully. Get rid of the clutter within -the odds 'n ends of foolish thoughts and familiar sins we find difficult to let go and let God handle. Advent is heart-cleaning time, so call in the Holy Spirit Cleaning Service, and make room for the best Guest anyone ever had. Start now! Let the Spirit "cast out our sin and enter in." Let Christ "be born in us today." The Holy Spirit Cleaning Service comes with a guarantee: when the Spirit finishes with your heart, you'll have the best Christmas ever!
- **Did You Know?** Mike and Diane Dunphy became grandparents for the very first time, with the birth of Brendan Michael Dunphy, born to Brian and Shannon in Fort Myers, Florida on Thursday, November 8, 2007.
- **Have Your Heard?** Our Sunday Night at the Movies was a great addition to our schedule! Several of our younger members who missed the Confirmation Program, their families, and a few others from Zion enjoyed three excel-lent movies, fabulous snacks, and some good conversation afterwards. Look for it to start up again with the new year.
- **A Christmas Eve Prayer** - Give us, O God, the vision to see your love in the world in spite of human failure. Give us the faith to trust your goodness in spite of our weakness to pursue it. Give us the knowledge that we may continue to pray with understanding hearts, and show us what each of us can do to move us forward toward the day of peace, true peace within, and everlasting peace on earth ... in Jesus' name. Amen

"O good and gracious God, we have been blessed beyond what any might have imagined. Our hearts and lives and voices overflow with praise and thanks for all that you have given us. We thank you especially for the opportunity to think about our responsibility for persons in need here in our community.... Bless those who serve and all who are served through the distribution of food and the overflow of love that is offered through the many food pantries that are a part of the Stark County Hunger Task Force. We are thankful for our site at Zion, and for the community of churches here in North Canton - all of us together - joining in our common work of living a love that abound to your glory and contributes to the benefit of all who need you ... in Jesus' name. Amen"
