

GREETINGS FROM THE PASTOR:

It is no longer a secret. The Boiler Pledge Drive has been an astounding success. Even before we were able to do any phone calling, members responded to show their interest and share their generosity. Within two weeks of voting to approve plans for a new Heating, Ventilation, and Air-Conditioning system, early pledges authorized the go-ahead to proceed with signed contracts and work schedules. Work on the Pastor's Office and the Secretary's Office will begin immediately. Rooftop air-conditioners need to be ordered. Work on the new boiler must await some asbestos removal related to the old boiler, which we expect to begin as soon as Vacation Bible School concludes. What an amazing beginning, and what wonderful support.

Pledge Drives certainly require attention to the details of dollars and cents; but there are other measures of success, like growth in camaraderie and community! That measure was clearly evident in the conversation we enjoyed at our Congregational Meeting, and in all of our conversations since. We have been of one mind in addressing the issue of the need to replace the old boiler, and our actions have displayed a unity of purpose, too. As many of you know, I love Paul's image of each member of the church being a membrane in the body of Christ [1st Corinthians 12:27]. It seems to me that we have experienced the full force of this imagery with each membrane at Zion getting the signal sent by the mind of Christ that the health of the body requires an effective system that regulates heating and cooling.

Our fundraising plan called for a 50-50 split between present giving through pledges and legacy gifts, which we refer to as the Merrill Lynch account. As of this writing, 60 pledge cards have been returned, amounting to almost \$40,000 for year #1 and over \$20,000 for year #2. That's right! We're closing in on our goal of raising \$60,000 over two years. Your support has been overwhelming, and we are deeply grateful. It is no longer an issue of whether we will raise the money we need, but how wide the participation will be; and it looks like every membrane in our body senses the need to join in this effort. The truth is that heating, ventilation, and air-conditioning affects all of us in this body, and our hope is that all of us will share in the joy that comes with accomplishing this important goal and pressing need together. That's the measure we're looking for – sharing in community, showing camaraderie. For these are what it means to live as a family that is growing in love and service by grace ... together.

In His service, and yours,
Pastor Mark Sherwindt

CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

We enjoyed almost perfect attendance again: Carol Rossbach, Jim Fidler, Jayne Schrader, Dave Palumbo, Bob and Linda Lancashire, Betty Tracy, Steve Ross, Mary Humbert, Chris Thomas, Mark Votaw, and Pastor Sherwindt. The primary matter for discussion focused on moving ahead with the HVAC system.

Jim Fidler made the following motion: *“Given that pledges-to-date have met the required support, we authorize the appropriate members of Council to enter into contractual agreements with all entities necessary to effect implementation of needed renovations to Zion Lutheran's heating, ventilation and air-conditioning systems, consistent with the proposal approved by the Congregation at the Congregational Meeting on June 4, 2008.”* Chris Thomas seconded the motion, and Council approved it unanimously!

Finally, after starting the year with four months of deficits, May offered a respite from falling short of our monthly operating expenses. We trimmed our year-to-date budget shortfall from \$8,883 to \$7,987. That’s a start in the right direction, and it looks like June, a five-Sunday month, will show some healthy follow through.

<u>ZION'S FINANCIAL FACTS FOR MAY</u>	
May Income	30,618.01
May Expenses	<u>29,722.05</u>
May Surplus	+ 895.96
Income through May	104,031.67
Expenses through May	<u>112,018.90</u>
2008 YTD Deficit	(7,987.23)
2007 YTD Deficit	(3,670.11)
<i>We thank you for your generous support!</i>	

MORE COUNCIL NEWS

Parish Life Ministry: Team Zion’s Coed Softball Squad has had a rough season, with one win and four losses thus far. The remaining schedule for Zion is as follows:
 05/04 Team Zion beat St. Paul (White)
 05/11 *No games scheduled: Mother's Day*
 05/18 Team Zion lost to Cross Point UM
 05/25 *No games scheduled: Memorial Day*
 06/01 Team Zion lost to Northminster
 06/08 Team Zion lost to Faith UM Church
 06/15 Team Zion lost to Walsh University
 06/22 Rain: Game rescheduled for 07/13
 06/29 Rain: Game rescheduled for 07/20
 07/06 *No games scheduled: Fourth of July*
 07/13 Church of the Lakes, 5 p.m., field #3
 07/20 St. Paul Blue Team, 6 p.m., field #3
 07/27 Round Robin Tournament, Week 1
 08/03 Round Robin Tournament, Week 2
 08/10 Round Robin Tournament, Week 3

More Boiler News: We reported that our Boiler Pledge Drive has been an astounding success, and here are the numbers thus far. We were hoping for 7 members to pledge at the \$1,000-plus level, and to date, an even dozen have done just that! We were hoping for 10 members to pledge at the \$500 level, and 10 members have done that. We were hoping that 15 would pledge at the \$250 level; we are at 18 and counting. We were hoping that 40 would pledge at the \$100 level, and almost 20 have done that. We have a ways to go in hoping that everyone has a chance to participate in this success, but we couldn’t be happier with our results.

Extra Giving News: In addition to the giving that supports our operating budget, Zion’s members and friends have also contributed \$26,843.61 to the Steve Dague Fund this year, and \$21,128 in donations for the new HVAC system so far this year.

HABITAT FOR HUMANITY: CAN YOU LEND A HAND, OR SPARE A DAY?

Zion has joined forces with Israel Lutheran Church in Paris, Ohio, in helping to build a home with the Jerome Newman family. Jerome is a single father raising two children, a son Phillip, who is fifteen, and a daughter JaRhya, who is three. The home in which their family resides has several structural issues, including no screens on any of the doors or windows, lights that dim whenever an appliance or another light is turned on, and a very strong odor of sewer gas in the basement. Even so, the rent is excessive, and that has strained the family budget beyond repair.

Jerome is employed as a serviceman for a local manufacturer. He has held this position for a good number of years, and his employer states that he is a steady and dependable worker. Jerome often works overtime in order to provide for his family. He describes himself as “versatile” and as someone who is “able to adapt” to many different situations. He considers himself blessed because of this opportunity to partner with Habitat. He is excited about becoming a homeowner, and looks forward to the stability it will bring his children.

Jerome’s home is located at 725 High Avenue SW in Canton. It’s a three bedroom ranch, with a living room, kitchen, dinette, one full bathroom, and enclosed porch. Our partners from Israel have been working since April 26th. We have been asked to join them on Saturday, July 26th, when the focus of the day will be painting the inside walls. This kind of work is within the range of everyone’s capabilities, and we would love to have men, women, our youth, and folks who are retired think about joining us for this one day, Saturday, July 26th.

We’ve got the whole of Vacation Bible School thinking about the ministry of Habitat for Humanity of Greater Stark and Carroll Counties during their five days of July 21—25. Our Work Day scheduled for Saturday, the 26th, will be a great way to end our VBS focus on service with an exclamation point! During the week of June 8—13, a group of thirty students and adult leaders from Providence Catholic High School in New Lenox, IL, used the floors of Luther Hall as their home away from home so they could volunteer their week to make a difference for families like Jerome, Phillip and JaRhya Newman. Now it’s our turn to make a difference, not by driving to New Lenox, Illinois, but by giving one day to help with the painting at 725 High Avenue SW. Please make it a point to join us for our:

Habitat Volunteer Service Day

Saturday, July 26, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

HELPING NEW ORLEANS HEAL, YEAR 3: WHAT IT MEANT (MARK VOTAW)

Mark down another success in the Zion ledger. Let's start with the mundane: LDR – Lutheran Disaster Response – knows their business. We stayed in a converted gymnasium, complete with men's and women's bunk rooms, lots of showers, and great food. Breakfasts were very much like a good continental spread at a motel; for lunch you built your own bag lunch including fruit, chips and granola bars; and dinner, oh, baby! They have a retired Downtown Chef, strong enough for one great meal a day: chipotle chicken that explodes in your mouth, red beans and rice that would make you cry. I tell you, this was southern cooking extraordinaire.

The volunteer coordinator at Adullam Christian Fellowship used to begin every morning with the words, "Let me tell you about your kids. They are special." That was doubly true this year. The kids really stepped up and dug in, physically and emotionally. They recognized that there was something else going on this year. Some progress had been made. Many things had changed, largely for the better; but there was something missing this year. That missing thing was the immediate and intimate contact we had with the people we were serving, a chance to hear the stories that people needed to tell us about what had happened to them. We missed that.

We were also Pastor-less this year, so our evening devotions changed in character. With the Pastor present, we would focus on the Eucharist. This year we talked about what had happened during the day and the experiences we had. We talked a lot about what brings us down to New Orleans. Think about it. Why would the Rosses give up a week of vacation to go down and bake in the Louisiana sun, working on the house of someone they never even got a chance to meet? The answers were phrased in terms of wanting to help people, but I think that is really *code* for *I feel a call*. It's different from the kind of stuff you normally associate with being called to ministry, but believe me when I say that the sound of scraping mortar off old bricks, or fitting tiles for bathrooms, or applying paint or primer to walls has been for us the voice of the Spirit calling God's people to service. To paraphrase Matthew 18:20, "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, I will be among you." We felt that presence in a very real way this week. You know, the Eucharist is more than some stuff that a pastor does, much more even than the transfigured body and blood of Jesus Christ. Each and every meal, each and every day, is an opportunity to sense the Lord's presence and serve the Lord's people. Traveling to New Orleans is a device that helps us focus our attention on that opportunity.

Sure, the kids had an experience they can't get here. They have seen how the other half lives, and *it ain't pretty*. All of this is important. But the reason we go is to experience Christ actively working through ordinary people who are simply trying to follow Jesus. The truth that God, through the Holy Spirit, is today, right now, everywhere actively touching people and healing them in no less real a way than the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment: that's worth driving for. There are lots of opportunities to serve right here in North Canton, to be sure. There is no shortage of suffering going on right around us. Habitat for Humanity needs our help. Our Food Pantry is a great place to serve. If you are looking for service opportunities, see the Pastor. I am sure he can help you find someone to help, and I encourage you to get involved. More importantly, get involved with the engine behind that concern, which is the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ our Lord. That's where it all begins.

GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Week of July 21 – 25: Dates for Vacation Bible School are set: *God's Big Backyard*

Thursday, July 24th: Vacation Bible School Program & Ice Cream Social, 7:00 p.m.

SUNDAY SCHOOL FOR ALL AGES: PRE-K THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

This summer we have changed our formal Sunday School Program. We have a *Service Activity* planned from 9:15 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. throughout the summer. This will include all the kids from Pre-K through High School, and will tie into our Vacation Bible School program, which also has a great emphasis on service. Dress the kids casually and comfortably because our activities will include working outside, baking, making cards and kits, and much more. Plan to join us this summer as we experience how important and wonderful it is to serve God and others.



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: MONDAY THRU FRIDAY, JULY 21—25

Vacation Bible School is fast approaching! Join us as we have a great week of learning and fun in *God's Big Backyard*! The week will be all about service: **Serve Family, Serve Friends, Serve Neighbors, Serve Community**, and, of course, **Serve Jesus**. It is going to be a great week of fun, fellowship and learning. Our VBS program is designed for children that have completed Kindergarten through 6th grade. Youth in the 7th grade and older are invited to help during the week. We have many volunteer opportunities!

Registration packets are now available in the Church Office. Please turn in your completed forms by *Wednesday, July 16th*, in order to help us order sufficient supplies. We will still accept registrations during the week of VBS. When you turn in your registration form, you will receive this year's Music CD – *Backyard Bash*. Music will again be a great part of our program thanks to Suzanne Walters!

We have a busy week planned! We'll get started in *God's Big Backyard* on Monday with an obstacle course and a lot of fun! Tuesday will be T-Shirt day, so each child will need a white T-shirt with their name on the label by Tuesday. We will also have a speaker from *Habitat for Humanity of Greater Stark and Carroll Counties*, and possibly another surprise guest during the week. Thursday evening is our *Ice Cream Social* at 7:00 p.m., sponsored by *Thrivent Financial for Lutherans*. Everyone is invited to join us that evening for our VBS Program and then for ice cream and fellowship. We will also have our *Quilt Raffle* that evening. Friday will be our *Backyard Fun Day*. This will include water activities and great games to celebrate our week of service! The children will need their swim suits, towels and sunscreen on Friday! Of course, we will have lessons, crafts, music, games, service projects and lunch each day as well!

GOOD NEWS ABOUT VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

This year’s theme is all about serving, and we are planning many service projects. Some are familiar and some will be different. The children will experience how important serving others and God is in their lives! We hope they will see that no matter how old you are, you can truly make a difference! The following is a summary of this year’s projects:



THE OFFERING – There will be a contest each day between the boys and girls to collect change as our offering. Each team will have a jar and the most money collected wins! This money will then be donated to *Habitat for Humanity of Greater Stark and Carroll Counties*, with a second charity chosen the week of VBS.

OUR FOOD PANTRY – We ask that each child bring in a food item each day, if possible. This food will help stock Zion’s Food Pantry, which has been about the ministry of helping many families in the community for going on eight years. With unemployment on the rise, and gas prices sky high, there has never been as great a need for this ministry as right now.

QUILT SQUARES – The children will once again create quilt squares for Zion’s Quilters to sew quilts for Lutheran World Relief. We will raffle one quilt to be chosen by the winner on Thursday evening at the Ice Cream Social. Tickets will be available during the week. As usual, it’s one ticket for a dollar, or six tickets for five dollars. Join us for all the fun!



DAILY PROJECTS – The children will work on a service project each day during the week. The projects will include charity banks, grocery totes, school kits, and much more.



SCHOOL KITS – We will be collecting items for school kits to help children in our community. Items needed are backpacks, paper, notebooks, folders, binders, glue, pencils, erasers, crayons, scissors, rulers and markers. Please bring in any donations by Wednesday, July 23rd. If anyone in the congregation is interested in donating items, please leave them in the Church Office.



We are looking forward to a great week and hope you will join us! We are still in need of volunteers for the week – especially in our kitchen! Please consider joining us one, two or all five days. It truly is a rewarding and enjoyable experience with a great group of kids! We have also put out sign-up sheets for food and supplies in Luther Hall, along with donation cans for those who are interested in helping. If you have any questions, or would like to volunteer, please call Debbie Fox at 330-966-2433. Also, watch the bulletin for work days in July to help us prepare for VBS week.



As always, thank you, thank you, thank you for your great support!



THANK YOU FROM TEAM ROMAN: YOU HELPED OUR TEAM FIGHT CANCER!



Team Roman would like to thank the Zion family & Pastor Sherwindt for all your support this year for Relay for Life! **We were able to raise \$12,700 to help fight cancer with your help!** This was our eighth year as a team for *Relay*, and it was our best year by far. We are so grateful and overwhelmed by the outpouring of support for this cause! Words can never express how much we appreciate everyone's time to come out to our events, everyone's donations and everyone's support in buying all of our fundraising items and raffle tickets! It touched us so deeply, and we know with everyone's help, we have made a difference in the fight for a cure!

The Lake Township *Relay for Life* took place on June 20th and 21st at the Lake Youth Football Stadium in Hartville and was a huge success. The event raised over \$83,000 and that number is still growing. There were many wonderful memories: the first lap to kick off the relay, where cancer survivors (including Zion and Team Roman members, Darlene Milavickas and Barb Achauer) walked around the track led by a seven year-old survivor, Joey Tubo; the touching luminaria ceremony to honor survivors and those who have passed; the team parade lap; great music, games, hugs and smiles galore; and the many, many laps that all the team members walked non-stop! Team Roman was there selling great food and hosting a *Carnival for a Cure* with an inflatable slide and fun carnival games. There was little sleep, but lots of support and love and emotion with the hope that there will one day soon be a cure for cancer!

We are thrilled with our fundraising accomplishments this year! Team Roman was the first team to raise over \$10,000 at a Lake Township *Relay for Life* event, helping us to achieve the Platinum Level. We ended up with \$11,400 on Saturday at the close of *Relay*, giving us the award for *Top Fundraising Family Team*. Additionally, we were the top fundraising team overall at the Lake Township *Relay*!

Because cancer has touched all of our lives in some way, fielding a *Relay for Life* team and raising funds for the Cancer Society is our way of remembering and honoring, not just Nancy and Commella Roman, but fathers, aunts, uncles, team members, friends, and countless others fighting, and hopefully beating cancer every day.

Thank you again – from the bottom of our hearts – for all of your support!

All of us from Team Roman 2008:

Doug, Lisa, Taylor & Brooke Roman
 Dean, Debbie, Nathan & Jeremy Fox
 David, Lynette, Andrew, CJ & Dana Roman
 Dennis Roman, Cheryl Roman, Jean Brown
 Darlene Milavickas and Barb Achauer
 Lori & Tom Collier and Janice VanVoorhis



THANK YOU'S TO ZION

Dearest Zion Family Members,

Thank you all so much for the lovely reception, the gift card, and the beautiful candle holder with a very meaningful message. Thank you even more for all the loving support and good wishes you've extended as I step away from the responsibilities and commitments of the music ministry.

I look forward to my new schedule, as well as beginning work on my Master's degree in Music Education at the University of Akron. I will greatly miss participating in this very important element of our worship life. I have enjoyed my involvement in this ministry over the years, and I am truly grateful for having been blessed with the opportunity.

*In Christian love,
Suzanne Walters*

Dear Zion Lutheran Church,

Thank you so much for letting us have our daughter's graduation party at Zion. Luther Hall was a great place for our celebration, and we appreciate being able to use the kitchen and have access to the basketball court in Memorial Hall. Again, thank you.

*Very thankful neighbors,
The entire Roman family*

Dear Zion Family Members,

Thank you for all the get well cards that you sent to Mom, especially during her last extended stay at Mercy Medical Center. Pastor's visits in ICU, and then in long-term rehab on the 6th floor were very much appreciated. We want to thank everyone who sent sympathy cards, those who were able to attend calling hours, and those who joined us for the Service of Christian Burial.

*Sincerely in Christ,
The Ila Givler Family*

MORE THANKS TO ZION

Dear Missioners from Zion Lutheran,

We at St. Andrew Lutheran Church in Franklin, Tennessee, were happy that you joined us for worship on Sunday, June 22, and we hope you felt welcomed as a part of God's family travelling through our neighborhood on your way to New Orleans. We hope that your work in New Orleans went well, and that your homecoming in North Canton was joyful. Thank you for remembering us with your generous gift. We are always happy to extend our Lord's hospitality to all who are trying to do his work.

*Very sincerely yours,
Pastor Michael Lippard*

Dear Pastor Mark,

Thank you very much for Zion's celebration of Ephraim's Service of Holy Baptism. The whole service was beautiful, everything that I had hoped it would be. Thank you again.

*Peace be with you,
Candi & Ephraim Cavender*

JULY SENIOR BIRTHDAYS

July 4	Virginia Long
July 4	Al Whitmer
July 9	Carole Singer
July 9	Stella Smiley
July 11	Joyce Gibeaut
July 11	Audrey Hartman
July 15	Ron Singer
July 23	Rose Marie Rapp
July 24	Edna Smith

ANNIVERSARIES IN JULY

July 10	Rick & Connie Riffle
July 10	Pastor Mark & Marilyn
July 16	Bob & Linda Lancashire
July 20	Brian & Suzanne Walters
July 21	John & Bonnie Farmer
July 27	Steve & Darla Dague

THE MEN OF ZION

The Lutheran Men in Mission *Annual Golf Outing* at Raintree Country Club in Uniontown is on for Saturday, July 12. We'll begin at Noon. It is a great day of fun, complete with prizes galore, great food, and lots of golf. We hope to raise lots of funds for men and women in our Northeastern Ohio Synod who have heard God's call to ministry and are responding by entering the seminary.

The Men of Zion had three special guests at our regular monthly meeting on July 3rd – **Steve, Eric, and Justin Dague!** What a sight, and what an enjoyable evening! Steve looked great, and he shared more about what the road to recovery looks like for someone recovering from a serious spinal cord injury. It's a long process. There are milestones, like learning to walk again, returning home, and coming to church. But the process of recovery takes a lot longer, and follows many detours on a road that passes through great joy and chronic discomfort. Steve told us that, on average, it will take three days of physical therapy for every day he spent flat on his back in the hospital waiting to recover. Since he spent three months flat on his back, he is looking at ten months of out-patient physical therapy working at regaining his strength. In one sense, his returning home from Edwin Shaw was a great victory of hard work, God's grace, lots of support, and unrelenting determination; but those ingredients will need to be present in abundance for some time yet to come as Steve continues his long journey to recovery.

The Men of Zion invite Zion's women and youth to join us on **Saturday, July 26**, as we help the Jerome Newman family build a home for themselves on 725 High Avenue SW in partnership with Habitat of Humanity of Greater Stark and Carroll Counties.

THE WOMEN OF ZION

While Vacation Bible School is mostly for kids, it will have quite an impact on **Zion's Comfort Givers**, who will focus their efforts on making quilts from the patches that our VBS kids create. Then, at Thursday evening's Ice Cream Social, they will auction off one of these quilts for the benefit of *Habitat for Humanity of Greater Stark and Carroll Counties*. The rest of the quilts will be packed up as a part of our Lutheran World Relief in-gathering this fall. As a result of this schedule, *Zion's Comfort Givers* will get together on their usual 2nd Thursday on July 10, and then the entire week of July 21—25.

Come to the Waters: the Women's Summer Bible study continues with water as the focal point. This month, we take a closer look at Baptism: *It's a Matter of Life and Death*. We often think of baptism as a necessary ritual for avoiding eternal damnation; but Luther looked at baptism as the spiritual discipline of daily dying. Daniel Berrigan saw it as a call to sacrificial living: "If you want to be a follower of Jesus, you better learn to look good on wood." Join us on Tuesday, July 15, at 9:30 a.m., when we gather in Luther Hall for lively discussion and good fellowship.

We were saddened to learn of the passing of **Mary Jane Hawkins**, a wonderfully supportive member who was called to her heavenly home on Saturday, June 28. Not many of us at Zion knew Mary Jane because she struggled with breathing and bronchial problems since becoming a member; but Mary Gsellman knew her well as the always friendly and ever-gracious neighbor who lived downstairs from her. They made a great connection, and Zion benefited with two faithful members. (Mary recently moved to Florida to be closer to her daughter, Lyn Eck.)

IN LOVING MEMORY OF FREDRICK "FRED" ELSASS

December 12, 1916 – June 27, 2008

Our First Lesson tells it like it is. There's no sugar-coating the realities of life in the Book of Ecclesiastes. It is no-nonsense realism, for those who can handle the truth. Listen to how it begins: "Vanity of vanities," says the preacher. "Vanity of vanities! All is vanity" [Ecclesiastes 1:2]. The Preacher is not talking about the vanity that happens when we're in front of the mirror too long. He is not a *Carly Simon* singing about folks who think every song is about them. The Preacher is talking about the vanity of watching the sands of time wash away the significance of everything that matters to us. Speaking on behalf of a world of workaholics, he raises the question, "What do we gain by all the work we do, by all the toil at which we toil under the sun? Generations come and go; but the earth remains forever." [Ecclesiastes 1:3-4] Empires rise and fall. Kings may be great or small. But all that remains is the dust that returns to the earth.

Ecclesiastes is the hard-nosed truth about life and death. But this fits Fred well. Fred was a no-nonsense, no-excuses kind of guy. *He called 'em as he saw 'em* – and, as many of you know, Fred had an accident at birth that pretty well blurred his vision most of his life! Twenty or so years ago Fred had sight-altering surgery, but even before that, in fact, all his life, he saw things that mattered clearly. So, here we are in Ecclesiastes 3, where, in verse 9, the Preacher reminds us about some undeniable truths of life. Again, he asks, "What do we gain from all the work we do?" For we all face the same inevitable ending we call death. And, then he offers those memorable lines, "*For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under the sun.*" That sounds great, so circumspect, even wise. It is so poetic that it sounds beautiful: "*a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to harvest what's planted; a time to kill and a time to heal; a time to break down and build up; a time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to cast your stones away, and a time to gather them together again; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; a time to seek and a time to find; a time to keep what you love close and a time to sow your seeds into the wind; a time to speak out and a time to keep silent; a time to love and a time to hate; a time to make war and a time to enjoy peace.*" [Ecclesiastes 3:1-8]

Again, it's so poetic that it sounds beautiful; but the Preacher is still unsettled. He is unsettled because of the lack of clear direction, no controlling the outcomes, and no final resolutions with happy endings. That's the point of the Preacher's question, "What have we gained from all the work we do, the time we commit, the love we invest." So, if you want to be ready to handle the truth, then you've got to be prepared for reality as we find it. Life can be hard. No, let me rephrase. Life is hard, sometimes harsh. What are you going to do with that? Take it on! That's the boxer in Fred. Give it to me straight. Fred could handle the truth – the truths about life and the truth about God. He was tough and tender, proud yet humble, a servant of the law, who lived with such grace and generosity and courage, a man with a clear commitment to justice, colored with a healthy sense of mercy. God blessed him in life and in death: ninety-one full years, strong to the end, with golden years that really were golden. Fred made the most of the talents God gave him. He was blessed by the Lord, and he was a blessing to others. He knew what it meant to hear others in this life commend his work as a good, faithful, and hardworking steward of the work he was given. Now he will hear those words of greeting from the Lord above, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your Lord."