

A WORD FROM THE PASTOR

Advent is a season of preparation. We are invited to prepare for the birth of our Lord, both in the manger and in our hearts, by becoming more aware of the ways in which we have been distracted by the world around from focusing on what it means to listen to God's Word and to see God's presence at work around us – in the church, in the world, and in ourselves. What are those distractions? It's no secret that the advertising community has invested billions of dollars and millions of hours trying to convince us that what we're really preparing for is the birth of an economic bonanza. All of us must do our part. Shop 'til you drop. Contribute to the economic recovery. Get those things that will make our children happy. These are not idle thoughts. They are our obligations as red-blooded, patriotic Americans.

That's why we have the season of Advent. That's why we switch things up and add another service to a holiday season that starts earlier and earlier, a season that seems like it can't get any busier, but then it does. The season of Advent reminds us about how thoroughly the gift-giving of Christmas has been taken over by our culture of consumerism. Advent is our attempt to save us from this vacuous and empty vision that doesn't lead to the fulfillment we seek, because it distracts us from the fulfillment God has promised with the gift of His Son. Our special services during Advent are not attempts to add to your busy schedules, but to invite you to refocus on how to keep Christ at the center of Christmas. This is not some pious platitude, but the answer God has given to filling that God-shaped hole in our lives that we try to fill with just about everything except what fits perfectly. What fits perfectly? Come, and see. Come, and eat. Come, and worship.

Our first Sunday evening Advent program (on November 27th) featured a delicious chicken casserole, with an extraordinary selection of music offered by Zion's Senior Choir, the Praise Team, our Singing Chef, and the congregation, together with powerful passages from Scripture beautifully read. What a great way to begin the season that awaits the arrival of the Word made flesh in the life and love of the Christ Child. Next up on December 4th are baked hams, Dale's *mac 'n cheese*, followed by a service that features prayers for peace and the songs of Taize. We must never forget that Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace, and the peace he promises begins by setting things right within so that we can make things right with others. The third Sunday evening in Advent means *Devitis' Italian sausage*, with Dave Palumbo leading Council's effort to make it worth your while to join us for dinner and for worship, when we will tell the story of salvation through Chrismons; and each family that attends will receive a Chrismon as a gift from the heart and hands of our resident artist, Carol Rossbach. That's December 11th.

As wonderful as this will be, the Youth of Zion and their families will not settle for second best when it comes to preparing a great dinner, and Carole Singer will delight us all by leading us through a celebration of Christmas carols from around the world on December 18th. Sunday evening Advent programs are not intended to be a burden, but a blessing that can help us keep Christ first in *Christmas*. Join us for these services. You'll be glad you did, and so will God, because Advent is the season that helps us clear away the distractions so that our Lord can clear a way into our hearts and become the peace we seek and the fulfillment of God's promises.

CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

Jim Fidler called our meeting of Council to order at 7:00 p.m. Members in attendance: Juanita Cignetti (Secretary), Dave Palumbo (Treasurer), Mark Votaw (Resource), Lorin Beaber (Property), Beth Shaheen (Social Outreach), Dale Jacobs (Worship), Cathy Harvey (Caring), Renee Keith (Learning), Vicki Givler (Parish Life), Pastor Sherwindt. Our first order of business was to offer Sue Heyard our thanks and appreciation for her years of service as Vice-President, while accepting, with regrets, her letter of resignation. It can happen that responsibilities at work squeeze volunteer time out of our schedule; and that's what happened to Sue. We were then happy to share our thanks for Brian Milek's willingness to step in to fill out the remainder of Sue's term as Vice-President.

Our next order of business was to approve the Treasurer's Report for October, which shared the good news that income for the month exceeded expenses for the seventh time in ten months for 2011. Unfortunately, the deficits from those first two months of the year with utility bills and snow-plowing at their highs have left us with a year-to-date budget deficit that will require some Council leadership and congregational resolve to retire.

FINANCIAL FACTS FOR OCTOBER

October Income	21,895.16
October Expenses	<u>20,353.74</u>
October Surplus	1,541.42
Income thru October	205,139.61
Expenses " October	<u>208,796.89</u>
Deficit thru October	(3,657.28)
2011 YTD (Deficit)	(3,657.28)
2010 YTD (Deficit)	(3,901.24)

We thank you for your generous support!

MORE COUNCIL NEWS

Worship Ministry, Dale Jacobs: The Advent and Christmas schedules are set, complete with hosts for our four Advent dinners (see page 2). There will be two services on the Saturday of Christmas Eve (6:00 p.m. & 8:30 p.m.), one service on Sunday, Christmas Day (10:30 a.m.), and two services on Sunday, January 1st, at 8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.

Witness Ministry, Jim Dansizen: Our hosting the Prosecutor's Presentation on *Senior Citizen Safety* on October 5 went off without a hitch. We had nice attendance, delicious snacks, and some informative presentations. We extend our thanks to David Held, Michael Grimes, Steve Wilder, John Bacon, James Knight, Larry Parker, the Men of Zion, the Church Office and the Witness Team.

Property Ministry, Lorin Beaber: We have been busy painting the pavilion, removing booths from Senior Independence, arranging for roof repairs at the parsonage, and trying to oversee general maintenance. The project on which we are presently focused is replacing the rot and repairing the fascia coverings on the addition to the parsonage.

Learning Ministry, Renee Keith: The Youth Missions Craft Show was a huge success. Our Sunday School Thanksgiving Service Projects went well. Now it's on to Advent and Christmas. The Advent Giving Tree will invite Christmas gifts and dinners for the families we serve through our Food Pantry; and the Christmas Program will be *Twas the Night Before ... A Christmas Pageant*.

Membership News: We were very happy to reaffirm our new membership connections with the Parkomaki family (John & Chrissy, and their twins, Jacob and Emma), along with Heather Hoffman and Howard Lindeman.

GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

Kelly Walters – Wednesday, December 14th
 Quintin Hilson – Monday, December 26th
 Joshua Hilson – Thursday, December 29th

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Sunday, December 11th: Children to assist with our Celebration of Chrismons, 6:15 p.m.
Saturday, December 17: Dress Rehearsal for Children's Christmas Program, 10:00 a.m.
Saturday, December 17: Pizza Party and Giving Tree Gift Wrapping Party at 12:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 18th: Our Children's Christmas Program at the 10:30 Service (only)
Sunday, December 18th: Youth of Zion & their families host the Advent dinner, 5:30 p.m.
Saturday, December 24: Zion's Sunday School will sing at our Family Service 6:00 p.m.
Sunday, December 25th: There are no Sunday School Classes scheduled on Christmas Day
Sunday, January 1st: Only the Adult Class will meet for Sunday School on New Year's Day

PRE-K THROUGH THE SIXTH GRADE

This December we will combine our Sunday School lessons with practice for this year's Christmas program. We will involve all of our youth, including those in Catechism and High School, with many different roles. We will have speaking parts for those children who are interested, along with other non-speaking roles to round out our program. This year's program is called "Twas the Night Before ... A Christmas Pageant".



We will enjoy the wonderful story of the events surrounding Christ's birth with rhyming dialogue, great music, and a talented cast of great kids. The majority of the Sunday School Hour on December 4th, the 11th, and the 18th will be spent preparing for this program, which will be performed at the 10:30 a.m. service on Sunday, December 18th. We will have dress rehearsal, our traditional Christmas Pizza Party, and our annual wrapping of the Giving Tree gifts on Saturday, December 17th, all starting at 10:00 a.m. We hope to be finished around 1:00 p.m.

As a reminder to all of our children, and their parents, there will be no Sunday School on Sunday morning, December 25th, and no Sunday School for our youth on January 1st. We will resume our normal Sunday School schedule at 9:15 a.m. on Sunday, January 8th.

A FEW WORDS OF THANKS TO OUR YOUTH AT ZION

Thank you to all of our youth for the great job they did decorating this year's Thanksgiving bags for some of the Siffrin homes in our community. On Sunday, November 13th, the youth from ages 3 to 18 decorated thirty-four grocery bags for this project. The youth and Sunday School staff would like to thank the leaders and volunteers of Zion's Food Pantry and Clothing Closet for all of their time and hard work in making such a big difference in the lives of those many families that need the help we provide through this ministry. You are greatly appreciated!

MORE GREAT NEWS FOR ZION'S YOUTH

CHRISTMAS IS A SEASON OF GIVING

The Youth will again sponsor our Advent Giving Tree this Christmas season for several families in our community who are in need. The Giving Tree (located in the Narthex) has tags with gift suggestions for these families. We are also hoping to help **all** of our pantry families by giving them Christmas dinner. So we have placed tags on the tree for a \$25 donation for Christmas dinners in addition to the gift tags. We are also collecting NEW toys for children of all ages to help with the Toy Giveaway that the Clothing Closet does on December 20th.



Please take one (or more) of the tags, purchase the item, and bring the gift, **unwrapped** with the tag attached, to church by the date listed at the bottom of the tag. The youth will be getting together on Saturday, December 17th, at 12:00 p.m. (after the Christmas Program rehearsal) to have pizza, and then wrap the giving tree gifts so that they can be delivered to the families we would like to surprise before Christmas day. Please help our youth to help these families have a Merry Christmas and feel God's love through this great service project.

As an added treat for the families we serve with our Food Pantry, Zion's youth and their families are asked to donate boxes of "kid-friendly" cereals (like Fruit Loops, Lucky Charms, Apple Jacks, etc.) and canned fruit cocktail, too. These items can help our pantry families enjoy the long holiday season together. These items can be placed in the red wagon in the Narthex, or given to your child's Sunday School teacher.

Thank you for all your support! Zion's church family is a truly wonderful family of loving and giving people. This especially rings true during this Holy Season as we celebrate the gift of God's love alive among us. We are so grateful for all that everyone does!

MORE GREAT YOUTH NEWS: ADVENT DINNER ON DECEMBER 18

Advent has arrived along with our wonderful Advent dinners and services. On Sunday, December 18th, the youth will host the Advent dinner. We are planning a delicious dinner, finished off with lots of great desserts. We will be contacting the youth and their families about donating items for dinner, helping to set up, serve, and then clean up afterwards. This is always a great dinner and we appreciate everyone's help to make it happen!

Our youth will also be helping with the Chrismon Service that is scheduled for the evening of Sunday, December 11th. The service starts at 6:15 p.m. It tells the story of Christ's birth using symbols from Scripture. We will need help with the readings and the ornaments.



Zion's Sunday School Staff would like to wish all of our families a very Merry Christmas and a Peaceful and Happy New Year!



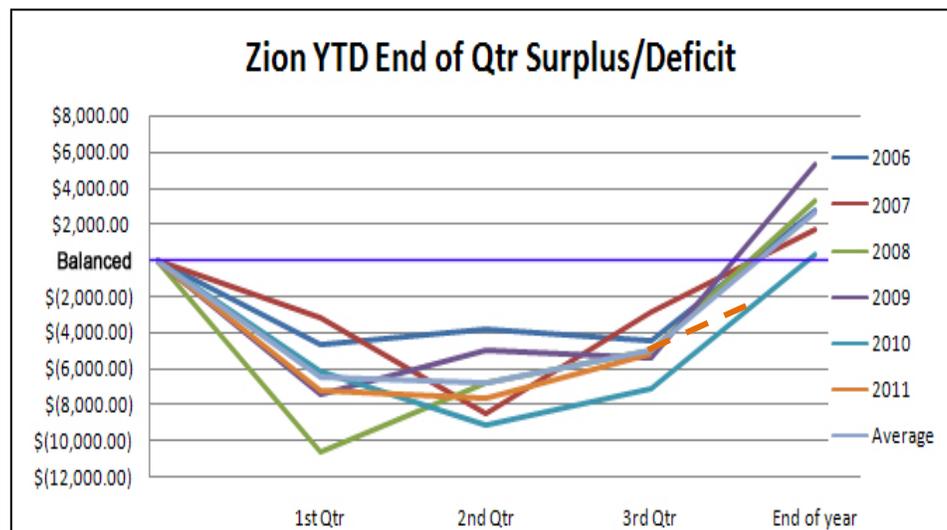
ADVENT IS OUR TIME TO HIT THE ACCELERATOR!

Welcome to Advent, that wonderful time of the year when we await the coming of the Christ Child in the manger. This is a very special time of year for me and my family. Lorraine is busy making the house festive and Tom is warming up his drum for the *Congregational Carol-fest* with Carole Singer. I look forward to the Sunday evening Advent services and dinners, where great meals are served and we get to enjoy a real addition to our worship life.

This is also the time of year when we do the hard work of closing the budget. The table below shows the difference between year-to-date income and expenses at the close of each quarter for the last five years. This looks scary. There is a lot of red ink there. And yet we have ***not failed to finish with a surplus***, and we have **had cash to carry forward into the next year each of the last five years.**

	1 st Quarter	2 nd Quarter	3 rd Quarter	4 th Quarter
2006	(\$ 4,688.05)	(\$3,825.54)	(\$4,522.44)	+ \$2,741.67
2007	(\$ 3,215.25)	(\$8,514.52)	(\$2,880.18)	+ \$1,670.03
2008	(\$10,568.22)	(\$6,793.10)	(\$4,998.41)	+ \$3,255.14
2009	(\$ 7,387.35)	(\$4,932.98)	(\$5,416.05)	+ \$5,292.65
2010	(\$ 6,098.46)	(\$9,069.84)	(\$7,095.23)	+ \$ 312.97
2011	(\$7,601.78)	(\$7,162.92)	(\$5,198.70)	+ ? ? ? ? ?

I am a geek and so sometimes I find it helpful to draw a picture to understand the pattern. It turns out that our annual pattern is pretty simple. We have high first quarter expenses: heating and snow removal. We drop into the red in the first quarter. Then we begin the long slog to work our way out. We trend up in the second and third quarters. In the fourth quarter we have the holidays and increased attention by members to close the gap. The orange line is this year. You can see that we are following the same pattern. Down early, slow steady climb up.



The dotted portion is what has happened since the end of the 3rd quarter. We finished September \$5,198 below expenses. We finished October \$3,657 below expenses. From what I heard about November's giving, at November's end we shrunk the deficit to right around \$2,795. We are in the Red Zone, the area where we can score; or, with a little acceleration, crossing the finish line in the black looks real possible.

HIT THE ACCELERATOR AND TAKE THE CHECKERED FLAG!

If you liked the tables and graphs on page 6, then you'll love the pictures on this page! The first picture is more of an illustration. It's the good news/bad news logo to the right. The table and graph tell a good news/bad news story. For instance, if you look at the table on page 6, there is both good news and bad news in comparing 2011 and 2010. The bad news is that we finished the third quarter of 2011 in the red; but the good news is that we're not as deep in the red as we were in 2010.



That's the good news/bad news for 2011. At the end of September, we were in the red, but better by \$1,900 than in September 2010. At the end of October, we were still in the red, but better by \$300 than in October 2010. At the end of November, it looks like we'll still be in the red, but better by \$350 than in November 2010. As we head into December, we only have \$2,795 to make up. That's better than last year; it's the best shape we have been in since 2008.

The fact that we always seem to be looking uphill as we head into December shouldn't be taken in the wrong way. I don't think this indicates we are a congregation that is not living within our means. I think we've developed a culture where we hold back a little to hold the Council accountable. Council gets it. We need to be good stewards of every asset we have. **In 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010 we finished the year with a surplus. We can do it again in 2011!**

It is a lot like Nascar drivers. We kind of coast, sitting back drafting behind the car in front of us, where the air resistance is less. Racers do that to conserve fuel so they can skip or delay a pit-stop. They also do it because in that formation both cars can move faster. The strategy then is for the trailing car to jump out at just the right time and slingshot forward to win the race. **Well folks, now is the time to put your foot on the accelerator and take the checkered flag.** We have four more Sundays, three Advent dinners, and two services on Christmas Eve.



We need to make this 6 in a row.

The Council is working on a stewardship program for January that will try to help us frontload some giving to offset the greater expenses we experience in the first quarter, mostly associated with snow removal and heating bills – but more on that later. **Please join with Pastor, the Council, and all of your church friends in making this the best Advent season ever. I am looking forward to every weekend.** May the child that is even now preparing to come into the world, touch each and every one of you this season.

Respectfully yours,
Mark A. Votaw

JAYNE'S ECOLOGY CORNER

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas already given the number of related ads and catalogs I am receiving in the mail and with the newspaper. It's time to arm ourselves against the season of consumption! Over the Christmas season, a lot more rubbish is generated than at other times of the year. Here are tips to help reduce your upcoming Christmas impact on the environment.

- When heading out to do your Christmas shopping, take your own reusable bags rather than using the plastic ones provided by stores.
- Thousands of tons of Christmas cards are purchased each holiday season. Try to purchase cards made from recycled paper; and after the holiday season, if you decide not to keep them, recycle them.
- Christmas wrappings are not all the same. Metallic and plastic type wrapping create added environmental dangers. They take longer to decompose, and they give off toxic gases when burned. Look for plainer wraps made from recycled paper, wrap gifts in scarves, or place in baskets. Make the wrapping a part of the gift, something that can be used for another purpose.
- If you're going to purchase Christmas tree lights this year; consider buying LED tree light sets – they'll last far longer and use a great deal less electricity.
- Use a timer for your external lighting decorations; again, a huge electricity saver.
- Before the gift-opening and feasting begins, have boxes or bins set up for cans, bottles, paper, gift boxes, etc. This will make your job easier at the end of the day and minimize the amount of recyclables heading for the landfill.

THE WOMEN OF ZION

The date for the *Chancel Guild Christmas Dinner* is set for Tuesday, **December 13**. Our hostesses this year are Helen Heller and Kay Davis. The cost is \$12.00 per person. The evening's Social Hour begins at 5:30 p.m., with dinner served at 6:00 p.m. Please let Helen Heller know of your desire to join us by Sunday, December 4.

Following a successful collection of quilts, blankets, school kits, and health kits on *Blanket Sunday*, we received a note of thanks from members of the Church of the Good Shepherd, UCC, in Boyertown, PA, reporting that they worked at the Material Resource Center in New Windsor, MD, packing boxes for Church World Service and Lutheran World Relief. They thought it would be nice to thank the original donors of the materials they processed. So, on behalf of their Good Shepherd Mission Team, Cynthia and Glenn Werstler thank the Women of Zion for your generosity in helping the church glorify our Lord by reaching out in love others in need. (FYI: The letter in its entirety is posted on the bulletin board in the Main Hallway.)

The women of Zion meet for their *monthly Bible study* on **Tuesday, December 20th**, in Luther Hall at 9:30 a.m. Our study of *The Gospel of Mark: To Follow and Serve* continues as our focus shifts to moving beyond the boundaries of convention and tradition to include everyone who needs God's love within the embrace of God's grace and the reign of God's kingdom. You are invited to join the Women of Zion at their monthly Bible study. Speaking about joining the women of Zion, the *Comfort Givers* can use your company this month. They will meet on December 8th and 15th at 9:30 a.m. in Luther Hall. (Make a note of the change to the 2nd and 3rd Thursdays in December.)

THANK YOUS AND MORE

To our friends at Community Christian,
What another wonderful gesture of support for the ministry of Zion's Food Pantry that you should fill your Sanctuary with donations of all sorts of food as part of an October *Harvest Festival* collection. Our Church Office enjoyed the happy task for driving all that food from your church to ours.

We would also like to thank the members of your *Koinonia Class* for their faithful support of our Food Pantry through monthly gifts personally delivered and gratefully received.

We thank you for your support!
The Church Office & Pantry Crew

Dear Barbara and Sam Bacon,

There are many community groups that take the time and interest to visit our Food Pantry and support its ministry with their generosity. We want to thank you for your leadership in maintaining the generous gifts that come our way from the Parkview Dinner Club.

The Church Office & Pantry Crew

GIVING THANKS FOR ZION

Dear Pastor, Congregation, and Pantry Crew,

Our AARP Chapter has supported the Stark County Hunger Task Force for many years and we were interested in getting a hands-on experience. On Tuesday, November 1, 2011, we visited your church to observe your Food Pantry's food distribution. We had gotten in touch with Shirley Cavender who invited us.

We didn't know what to expect that day, but we were very touched by the experience. The food distribution is well-organized and has such a variety of foods that recipients can choose from among options.

What we noticed more than anything was the compassion and caring that staff showed to the people they assisted. They seemed to know each person and what their needs might be.

Prior to our visit, we learned that your church also offered access to your Clothing Closet. We then held a successful clothing drive to help stock those shelves.

We were surrounded by the spirit of Christian love, and we were able to take those thoughts back to our chapter meeting to share with our members.

A heartfelt thank you to Shirley Cavender and the Food Pantry Crew at Zion for the great contribution they make to those in need, and to your church for proving the resources that make this ministry possible.

Sincerely,
Gladys Bellinski
Belden Everhard AARP Chapter 4121

(We extend our thanks to the many groups who contribute time, talents, and treasures to help stock the shelves of our Food Pantry and our Clothing Closet. God's blessings to all!)

FOOD FOR THOUGHT: WHAT ARE WE THANKFUL FOR?

What are you thankful for? I am so very thankful for my family, waking up to another day, and our very special Food Pantry Crew. A few weeks ago a group from AARP came to visit and to observe us in action. (See the letter of thanks on the previous page.) They stood in the middle of the gym where they could get a bird's eye view of the operation. With smiles and giggles of little girls past, they told me how amazed they were.

I was told that somehow through the organized chaos we were efficient and caring. All the crew members were so nice to the clients and the fun and camaraderie we had together was special. What these ladies witnessed and sensed is what happens every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month. I could not have been more thankful or prouder on the Monday and Tuesday of our Annual Thanksgiving Great Turkey Giveaway. The crew members knew their jobs and carried on with hardly the tiniest of directions. It only goes to show what dedication they have for people less fortunate than themselves.

That Monday and Tuesday could not have happened if it was not for the continual support from various groups in our community. The women of *Curves* on Market Avenue North collected 660 pounds of potatoes for us. Our Food Pantry's good friends, Peggy Muhlenkamp and her two children, baked and organized pumpkin pies. Between her contacts and help from *Cheese and Crackers Restaurant*, 100 pumpkin pies were donated. With the generous support we have come to rely on from Zion, we were able to purchase turkeys, stuffing, cranberries, noodles and delicious rolls.

Now we look forward to Christmas, and our wish is to be able to supply hams for the holiday. The hams will not only add pleasure to our client's holiday, they will also provide meat for a few extra days. The Advent Giving Tree offers many invitations to donate \$25.00 to help buy Christmas dinner for a family.

As we take stock of the year during this time of reflection and thanksgiving, I cannot help but recall a common experience during the summer months at Zion. There is a very special woman who can be found in the hallways of Zion, or in the garden out back. She wears a straw hat, has dirt under her nails, and has two very green thumbs. For years she has sowed her talents for gardening in order to provide fresh vegetables to our Food Pantry clients. If you guessed Ruth Elsass, you were 100% correct. She also is a very big part of what we are all about with the ministry of Zion's Food Pantry, namely, "that no one in this great country should have to go to bed hungry."

As Tiny Tim said,
"God Bless Everyone."
Shirley Cavender

(We have added another special touch to our Advent Giving Tree this year. We have asked you to choose the gift, for a boy or a girl, which Becky Aquilo will help us distribute. Becky will distribute these gifts on December 20. So, get them in to the Church Office by December 17.)