

CELEBRATING OUR LOOK BACK AT 2011

A look back on 2011 provides cause for celebration. Giving was great ... again, as we wound up with a budget in balance for the sixth year running. For that we *thank you*. We continued our commitment to traditions that have helped to make and keep us strong: the Souper Bowl for our youth in January, the Sunday evening Lenten dinners and services in February and March, Holy Week and Easter in April, the Mother's Day Breakfast in May, our Father's Day Weekend Prime Rib Dinner fundraiser in June, Vacation Bible School to begin the summer, our End-of-the-Summer Party to bring summer to a close, the start up of Sunday School in September, the Youth Missions Craft Show in October, our Great Turkey Give-away in November, Advent and Christmas to end the year. It goes by so quickly; and we're already heading toward Ash Wednesday and Lent again with the arrival of February.

Before we move too quickly into 2012, it might be nice to take a look at the new members we welcomed in 2011. Elizabeth Balla, a friend of Len & Vickie Swartz, was officially received as a new member at our May Council meeting, along with Kim Burzycki and her parents, Loren & Cindy, and Steve & Mary Jo Robbins and their sons, Alex and Patrick. Alex has been a strength on our softball team for years, as has been his fiancée, Valerie Cizek. Loren & Cindy, and Kim as well as Steve & Mary Jo are 8:00 a.m. worshipers; Betty Balla was open to both services; and Alex mostly joins Val at the 10:30 a.m. service. The September Council meeting officially received Betty and Harold Lloyd as new members. You might know them as the parents of Terri Cizek, which really puts the Cizeks at the center of evangelism efforts this year. However, I should add that in addition to saying welcome to Terri's parents, we said goodbye to Randy's, as his folks, Fred and Sandy Cizek, transferred their membership to Grace Lutheran Church By-the-Sea in Nags Head, NC.

Of course, that's not all of the new member activity we enjoyed in 2011. We also received as new members Heather Hoffman, the Parkomaki family, John & Chrissy, with twins, Emma and Jacob, and Howard Lindeman, a good friend of Susan Everhart. Seven members were received as Confirmed members with the Affirmation of their Baptism: Savannah Heller, Natalie Henderson, Max Jacobs, Lya Milek, David Panzarello, Brandon Stout, and Kevin Walters. We congratulate each one. We also said farewell to several members, some through letters of transfer, and others, sadly, through death. Steve & Linda Ross, and Jan Deibel transferred to ELCA congregations in the communities where they now live. Members who were called to their heavenly home this year were Rose Marie Rapp, Doris Spall, Helen Edwards, Mabel Snyder, and Betty Balla. When all was said and done, added and subtracted, we added 9 baptized members to our rolls in 2011 and 14 confirmed members, as well.

It's nice to celebrate the good news of balanced budgets and a growing membership. But, as I said at this time last year, we'll need to start thinking of what we would like to do when our bicentennial rolls around. Now is a good time to start formalizing our plans with the establishment of a committee to get the ball rolling. So, get your thinking caps on and start imagining some great things for 2014 when Zion turns 200! Of course, we could use your help in imagining things that will make our 198th a great year. We've got a lot to do right now to make sure that we are moving in a direction that will make us healthier and stronger as a witness to the love God calls us to share with the world. 2012 is a year for actually getting started ... both on the big tasks of planning important anniversaries and on the small things that will make this year a year to remember ... for the good we do ... in Jesus' name.

FOOD PANTRY SUPPORT

The story of support that keeps Zion's Food Pantry financially afloat is more interesting than many might imagine. Our congregational family is the mainstay of what keeps our Food Pantry going, but we receive help, substantial help, from many individuals and groups in addition to the members of Zion.

Many of us already know, for example, that our Food Pantry is affiliated with the Stark County Hunger Task Force. We are known as its North Canton satellite. The Stark County Hunger Task Force has more than twenty such satellites in Stark County, although we are by far its strongest and most efficient. Its umbrella-like oversight of these satellites results in receiving funds through grants and donations, some of which it shares with us. In 2011, the Stark County Hunger Task Force shared \$1,447.00 to help with our expenses.

In addition to the Stark County Hunger Task Force, fellow congregations in the North Canton Ministerial Association also support our Food Pantry with gifts of food and monetary donations, too. Our most faithful partner is Christian Community Church, whose *Koinonia Class* contributed \$600.00 to our Food Pantry in 2011.

Community groups like the Parkview Dinner Club, local chapters of the AARP, Christian Women's groups, and even the company that wound up with what was left of the Hoover Company, namely, TTI, has been a big backer of Zion's Food Pantry. Together, these groups contributed \$610.00 to the ministry of our Food Pantry. Of the \$8,300.64 we received to run this ministry, Zion gave \$5,643.64. That is what we give year in and year out; but lots of others join in the success that this ministry has become. For that, we thank God, and our partners, too.

MORE ON OUTREACH

Blanket Sunday in October and *Thankoffering Sunday* in November form two bookends of support for the work of the Women of the Church. With our offering of support for the *Women of the ECLA*, which totaled \$602 this year, we strengthen one of the many pillars that buttress the work we do as Lutherans across the country and around the world. With our quilts and blankets for *Lutheran World Relief*, we join in strengthening one of the most efficient ministries of outreach the world has seen.

You might be interested in knowing that in early January, LWR Mission Quilts found their way to *Missionaries of Charity*, the order founded by Mother Teresa to care for the world's most impoverished people. Missionary Sisters distributed over 700 Quilts at *Prem Dan*, a shelter for homeless and destitute women and men in Kolkata, India. LWR Quilts, stitched in love, brought joy and warmth to the residents of Prem Dan. They also represent a powerful connection between Lutherans in America and Mother Teresa's inspiring ministry.

With these products of needle and thread, we can reach out to those in the greatest need and wrap them in comfort. We can show them that they are not alone. In the simple act of stitching a Quilt, we can touch lives, inspire hope and create change. As Mother Teresa said, "There is always the danger that we may just do the work for the sake of the work. This is where the respect and the love and the devotion come in — that we do it to God, to Christ, and that's why we try to do it as beautifully as possible." Through these gifts of LWR Quilts, Lutherans live out these words every single day. Thank you! (*Learn more about LWR Quilts at lwr.org/quilt.*)

CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

Our January Council Meeting began with a devotional focus on the work God has yet to accomplish through us at Zion Lutheran Church. Jim Fidler called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., and Lorin Beaber turned to Ephesians for our devotions. Also present were Juanita Cignetti, Dave Palumbo, Brian Milek, Beth Shaheen, Mark Votaw, Renee Keith, Vicki Givler, and Pastor Sherwindt.

The Treasurer's Report documented the good news of 2011: Total Income in December was \$29,133.72! Income exceeded expenses in December by \$2,701.75, which allowed us to break into the black for the year by \$41.96. Our goal is to end the year with our budget in balance, which we did in 2011, just as we did in 2010, 2009, 2008, 2007, and 2006. Over the course of these past six years, we have accumulated a positive surplus of \$1,970.04. While balancing our budget, we were also able to exceed our targets for benevolence, which totaled \$30,058.00. Support was given to the Northeastern Ohio Synod, the Lutheran Malaria Initiative, Midwest Flood Relief, our Food Pantry, a summer camp in Armenia, the Women of the ELCA, the Steve Dague Fund, and lots of additional local assistance.

ZION'S DECEMBER FINANCIAL FACTS

December Income	\$ 29,133.72
December Expenses	<u>\$ 26,431.97</u>
December Surplus	\$ 2,701.75
Income thru December	\$252,918.28
Expenses " December	<u>\$252,876.32</u>
Surplus thru December	\$ 41.96
Our 2011 YTD Surplus	\$ 41.96
Our Accumulated Surplus	\$ 1,970.04

We thank you for your generous support!

MORE COUNCIL NEWS

Resource Ministry, Mark Votaw: What's a Challenge Bucket? That's what the newsletter cover asks, and that's what Mark's letter to Zion answers. The short answer is that this Challenge Bucket is Council's invitation to front-load enough giving in February to keep us operating in the black most of the year. We like the results we've enjoyed these past six years with budgets in balance; we'd just like to do it a bit differently. Mark's letter is funny and clear, and if you'd like to read it, it's on page 5. Council wants to lead the way; we just need your support to get there.

Property Ministry, Lorin Beaber: There are no major repair projects on the docket, but we have attended to some minor repairs around the church. While our 2011 utility bills were about \$2,000 higher in 2011 than in 2010, the milder weather so far this winter bodes well for lowering these costs in 2012.

Learning Ministry, Renee Keith: We are back to our regular schedule, and we look forward to getting ready for Lent, Holy Week, and the Easter Play on Palm Sunday, which is April 1st – no fooling!

Worship Ministry, Dale Jacobs: The Lenten season begins with a service that features the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday, which is February 22nd. We will then host five Sunday Evening Lenten dinners, which typically begin at 5:30 p.m. and are followed by services at 6:15 p.m. The Men of Zion are set to host our first Lenten dinner (February 26), followed by the Chancel Guild (March 4), Zion's Senior Choir (March 11), the Church Council (March 18), and the Youth of Zion (March 25). Palm Sunday features the Sunday School Easter Play at the 10:30 a.m. service, which leads through Holy Week to the celebration of Easter on April 8.

Fellow Zioneers,

Let me thank you for your generous outpouring of support for the operating budget in December. Thanks to you we are 6 for 6 in the black. You certainly picked the right time to slingshot out of the “drafting position” to make things happen. Thank you!



Mark the Enforcer

Preparing for my temple talk in December, I realized that our problem with the budget is truly not a lack of dollars. Six in a row is a record that speaks for itself. We are not living beyond our means. We would not have a record like that, six years in a row, if there was a lack of support. I am not that good a salesman (or arm twister).

The problem is that most of our expenses come in the first quarter while most of our income comes in the fourth quarter. Over the last six years, Zion has averaged about \$6,500 more in expenses than we collected in revenue during this first quarter.

So we need a plan to frontload some giving earlier in the year. We do not need more dollars, we simply need earlier dollars. Your Council has come up with a plan to accomplish exactly that. I am excited to introduce to you Zion’s **Early Bird Giving** campaign. It works like this:

The Council has put together pledges totaling \$2,500. We would like the congregation to front-load their giving by a similar amount; and we’d like you to do this by March 31st. If members acting together match what the Council has pledged, then we will have met our goal.



Council Leadership	Congregational Response	Advanced Giving Recognized in January	The Total for our Early Bird Giving
\$2,500	\$2,500	\$2,500	\$7,500!

An infusion of \$7,500 in the first quarter would give us a real chance to keep revenues ahead of expenses all year long. Again, the money we are talking about is not additional dollars. You have proven that over the course of the year we collect what we need. This is simply a fun way to get some of those dollars closer to when we incur the expenses.

Thank you again for your generous support of Zion, our programs, and our community. It goes without saying that we could not do any of this without you. Now, take the Challenge. Reach the Goal. Council members really do want to put their money where their mouths are. Help us do that with a little bit of your timely, front-loaded generosity.



Yours in Christ,
Mark Votaw
Resource Ministry Elder

GOOD NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL



HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO:

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Sunday, February 5th: The 2012 Souper Bowl of Caring featuring *Shoes & Clothes for Kids*

Saturday, February 11th: Zion hosts a Spaghetti Dinner for Eric Dague's Boy Scout Troop

Sunday, February 19th: Our *Farewell to Alleluia* signals that Lent begins on Ash Wednesday

Wednesday, February 22nd: Lent begins with the Imposition of Ashes on Ash Wednesday

Saturday, March 31st: Dress Rehearsal for Children's Easter Program, and a Pizza Party, too

Sunday, April 1st: The Children's Easter Program is set for Palm Sunday at the 10:30 service

Sunday, April 8th: Our Annual Children's Easter Egg Hunt for all ages during Sunday School

SUNDAY SCHOOL CLASSES: PRE-K THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL

Sunday School will continue on its normal schedule during February. As a reminder, Sunday School begins at 9:15 a.m. each Sunday and ends at 10:15 a.m. Our classes will continue to learn important lessons from the Bible along with much fun and learning for all with crafts, puzzles, games, and snacks. Please join us!

THE 2012 SOUPER BOWL OF CARING

The Youth of Zion are once again participating in the Souper Bowl of Caring. This is a great project that more than 260,000 young people across the nation participated in last year to help end hunger and poverty in their communities. Last year over \$9.6 million in food and money was raised and donated to over 10,000 charities. What an amazing act of caring!



Zion's youth will be collecting money and nonperishable food items through Sunday, February 5th. Their goal is to match and then exceed the amount of \$400 they collected last year. There are signs throughout the church and a collection can in the Narthex outside the Church Office. There will be youth present to collect money and food before and after both services through February 5th. We appreciate all of your support and look forward to everyone's generosity and support of Zion's youth and this project.

For your information, all food collected at Zion for the 2012 Souper Bowl of Caring Campaign will go to Zion's Food Pantry. All money raised will be used by our youth to shop for shoes and clothing for children that are served through the Cleveland-based charity called *Shoes & Clothes for Kids*. We thank Tina Beaber and our youth for all of their enthusiasm in organizing and carrying out such a worthwhile project; and thanks to all of you for your support, too.

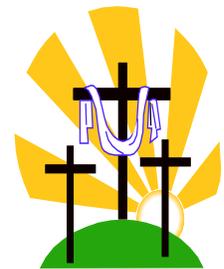
MORE GREAT NEWS FOR ZION'S YOUTH

FUTURE SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ZION'S YOUTH

We are currently researching and attempting to organize several service projects for the Youth of Zion. We have been talking with the kids to see which projects they would be excited to participate in. Some of the results so far that we are looking into include projects that involve us in helping the Humane Society, Solid Rock (a therapeutic riding stable in Hartville), the Boys and Girls Clubs, and helping out at an area soup kitchen. We are hoping to schedule a monthly service activity for our youth. We continue to invite your input, and ask that you watch for more information by personal email and in future newsletters.

LOOKING AHEAD TO LENTEN DINNERS & EASTER PLAYS

We are looking ahead to Lent and Easter because the Lenten season will be here before we know it! We are planning our traditional activities for Zion's Youth and Sunday School: the Children's Easter Program at the 10:30 a.m. service on Palm Sunday (April 1st), the Easter Egg Hunt between the services on Easter Sunday (April 8th), and, of course, our hosting the dinner and leading the service on the evening of the Fifth Sunday in Lent, which is March 26th. We have not given a single thought to the menu; but the service features our youth in reading roles as we present the Passion Narrative in the Gospel of Mark. When it comes to thinking about our Easter play, we will start practicing for our program in March, and, as is our custom, we will be collecting Easter candy and small prizes in March for the Easter Egg Hunt.



A FINAL CALL TO ALL FOR ACME RECEIPTS

Thank you for turning in your Acme receipts. Please continue to bring in your Acme receipts. Our collection jar is located outside the Church Office in the Narthex. We will get credit for all receipts that are dated between September 24, 2011 and February 11, 2012, and that show a "community cash back" amount at the bottom of the receipt. Please bring all of your receipts to church by Sunday, February 26, 2012.

SPAGHETTI SUPPER FUNDRAISER FOR TROOP 10

The Dague family invites their congregational family at Zion to join in a great fundraising opportunity to support Boy Scout Troop 10, which is Eric's troop. The date is Saturday, February 11th, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Spaghetti will be on the menu, and the cost is \$6.00 for adults and \$3.00 for children. Zion hasn't hosted a scouting event for quite some time; but it's very easy. Just show up on the 11th, and enjoy a great dinner, which will taste even better knowing that we are helping young boys grow into the wisdom of becoming responsible young men. We'll also be helping to offset some of the costs for summer camp.



BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA®

NCMA SCHOLARSHIPS

The *North Canton Ministerial Association* has offered a scholarship for graduating seniors heading off to college for years; but recently this scholarship has been increased to \$1,000.00! Graduating seniors from congregations that are members of the North Canton Ministerial Association are eligible to apply, and Zion is a member congregation.

Applicants are invited to write an essay that describes how their Christian faith has shaped their life. Stated even more simply, applicants are asked to describe the ways in which God's love for them has led them to share this love with others. God's influence can be seen in the ways we are involved in the life of the church, as well as in the ways we try to serve our Lord in that part of our life that takes place outside of the church, through service projects in the community, helpfulness at home, mutual support with friends, with a discerning eye and a loving heart as we encounter persons who need God's help and ours. Zion has been blessed to have many younger members over the years who have lived their faith in ways that is nothing short of remarkable; but we have not had many who have applied for this scholarship. Let's change that pattern this year.

Now is the time to pick up a copy of the application at the Church Office. The Pastor would love to help those who would like to apply to think about ways of making your faith statement easy to grasp, and the story of your faith-in-action even easier to tell. If you are interested in finding out more about this scholarship opportunity, just let the Church Office know, and we'll get back to you even before you've had a chance to tell us! Well, that's not quite right; but we will get back to you with the information and help you desire.

ELCA MALARIA CAMPAIGN

The *ELCA Malaria Campaign*, working through Lutheran Churches in Africa, is uniquely positioned to provide mosquito nets, insecticides, medication, health care, education and more to eliminate deaths from this disease for good. Every 45 seconds a child dies of malaria, a treatable and preventable disease that kills more than 800,000 people a year, mostly children in Africa. "Our goal is to educate, equip and mobilize," said Arne Sorenson. The ELCA Malaria Campaign will now provide new opportunities for college and university students attending Lutheran schools and ELCA campus ministries to engage in the global fight against malaria. Supported with a generous gift from Arne and Ruth Sorenson of Washington, D.C., the campaign and initiative will help equip and inspire young leaders to help make a difference.

Sorenson went on to say, "We want to raise awareness of the malaria epidemic among students on Lutheran schools and campus ministries, to equip them to inspire their fellow students, teachers and communities, and assist them in mobilizing communities to make a difference in the fight against this devastating disease. By investing in helping students raise funds for malaria, we're able to multiply the impact of our own gift to reach even more people in need with life-saving prevention and treatment, and also helping to develop the next generation of leaders in the church." Through the ELCA Malaria Campaign, the Sorenson College and Campus Ministries Program and Sorenson Social Media Grants will provide funding in the form of grants for students at the ELCA's 26 colleges and universities and campus ministries to implement awareness and fundraising campaigns at their schools.

THE WOMEN OF ZION

Women's Monthly Bible Study: We continue our study of *The Gospel of Mark: To Follow and To Serve*. February's lesson focuses on the tough questions we find in Chapter 10. Questions concerning marriage and divorce are raised here; and then Jesus is asked about how we get to heaven. The heart of what Jesus is saying in this chapter is not focused on heaven, but on earth, and the road to the Cross that will reveal the wisdom of God's ways and the power of His love. This is the third of three passion predictions. The first prediction of the suffering that awaits Jesus on the Cross was preceded by the miracle of a blind man made to see. This third prediction of the suffering that awaits Jesus on the Cross is followed by the miracle of a blind man made to see. The point is that we remain blind to what God is saying through Jesus until we can see how central the Cross is in all Jesus does to reveal the nature of God's love and the promise of salvation. You are invited to join the Women of Zion in the Resource Center on the third Tuesday, which is **February 21st**, when the coffee is served and the conversation begins at 9:30 a.m.

Zion's Comfort Givers: Despite interruptions caused by snow and cold, we are determined to stick to our regular schedule of meeting on the second and fourth Thursdays, February 9 and 23, in Luther Hall, at 9:30 a.m. We enjoy coffee, conversation, and being filled with the feeling of knowing that we are helping others through the good that we do.

Zion's Chancel Guild will host the dinner we serve on the Second Sunday in Lent, which is March 4th. Dinner is served at 5:30 p.m., and the service follows at 6:15 p.m., when we will be joined at worship by Zion's Senior Choir. Mark the night, and plan to attend.

ST. VALENTINE & MORE

Valentine lived in Rome during the third century. He was a pastor in the church when Claudius the Cruel was Emperor of Rome. Claudius was called Cruel because he banned marriages for young men of enlistment age. Valentine was put into prison for breaking the law by performing marriage services in secret. Young people came to the jail to visit Valentine. They wanted him to know that they, too, believed in love. One of those young people was the daughter of the prison guard. Her father allowed her to visit Valentine in the cell. Sometimes the two of them would sit and talk for hours. They lifted each other's spirits, and both agreed that Valentine did the right thing by ignoring the Emperor and going ahead with the secret marriages. His friend was blind, and over the course of many visits, God cured her of her blindness. When news of that miracle got out, Claudius the Cruel worried that news of Valentine's power might spread; so he moved up the execution. On the day Valentine was to die, he left his friend a little note thanking her for her friendship and loyalty. It was signed, *from your Valentine*. It was this note that started the custom of exchanging love messages on Valentine's Day. This first *Valentine* was written on the day that Valentine died, February 14, 269 CE.

The **Men of Zion** will need to begin making plans for the first Sunday Evening Lenten Dinner, which we will host on **February 26th**. We also want to meet regularly again, with an added focus of beginning our meetings with Bible study as we move forward in becoming a strong and vibrant men's ministry at Zion. You will want to mark **Monday, March 12th**, on your schedule as Brian Milek makes plans to begin our men's meeting and ministry with a Bible study he will lead.

A LOOK AHEAD TO OUR LENTEN SCHEDULE AT ZION

February 22, Wednesday	7:00 p.m.	Ash Wednesday Worship Service "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."
Our worship includes an extended Rite of Confession, the Imposition of Ashes, special music from the Senior Choir, and the Celebration of Holy Communion.		
February 26, Sunday	8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.	Lent 1 , Mark 1:9-15 (Temptation)
February 26, Sunday	5:30 p.m.	Dinner hosted by the Men of Zion
February 26, Sunday	6:15 p.m.	Jim Fidler's Portrayal of St. Peter
March 4, Sunday	8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.	Lent 2 , Mark 8:31-38 (The Cross)
March 4, Sunday	5:30 p.m.	Dinner hosted by the Chancel Guild
March 4, Sunday	6:15 p.m.	Lenten Renewal at Worship: <i>Taize</i>
March 11, Sunday	8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.	Lent 3 , Exodus 20:1-17 (The Law)
March 11, Sunday	5:30 p.m.	Dinner hosted by the Senior Choir
March 11, Sunday	6:15 p.m.	A Service of Special Lenten Music
March 18, Sunday	8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.	Lent 4 , John 3:14-21 (God's Love)
March 18, Sunday	5:30 p.m.	Dinner hosted by the Church Council
March 18, Sunday	6:15 p.m.	Jim Fidler's Portrayal of Caiaphas
March 25, Sunday	8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m.	Lent 5 , John 12:20-33 (The Promise)
March 25, Sunday	5:30 p.m.	Dinner hosted by the Youth of Zion
March 25, Sunday	6:15 p.m.	The Passion Narrative of Saint Mark

LENT HELPS US SEE THE CONNECTION BETWEEN CHRIST AND CROSS

The Gospel of Mark begins abruptly with the announcement that Jesus Christ is *the Son of God*, our Savior. (Mark 1:1) God confirms this Good News at Jesus' Baptism. (Mark 1:11) From that point on in Mark's Gospel, we never hear these words uttered rightly again until they are spoken by the Roman centurion, who upon witnessing the death of Jesus on the Cross, responds by saying, "Truly, this is *the Son of God*." (Mark 15:39)

Demons sometimes try to reveal who Jesus is, like when they declare Jesus to be "the Holy One of God" in Mark 1:24, or when the Gerasene demoniac calls Jesus "the Son of the Most High God" in Mark 5:7. But these are demons, not disciples who know the meaning and truth of what they say. Of course, even the disciples, who call Jesus their Teacher, Rabbi, Lord, and even the Christ, make it clear time and again that they do not understand what they are saying when they are trying to identify who Jesus is.

The Gospel of Mark is telling us that unless we are the all-knowing God, who twice identifies Jesus as His Son (Mark 1:11; 9:7), we cannot understand what it means to say that Jesus is the Son of God until we see the role that the Cross plays in defining the purpose of his mission and the character of his identity as *the Son of God*. The Cross is the key to knowing *what's in the name*, when the name we're considering is Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Savior.