

GREETINGS FROM THE PASTOR:

What an incredibly summer-like month March has been. We experienced a dusting of snow the first weekend of the month, and then it was into the 70s and up to the 80s for some of the mildest weather we've enjoyed in years. What a difference this has made to utility bills and snow-plowing expenses! It is almost as if we have had an extended Christmas present, with lower expenses combining with Early Bird Giving to bolster our budget with a healthy surplus as we head into the Easter season. Imagine that: Christmas at Easter! Actually, this is not far from the truth of the Gospel. Back in my seminary days, a pastor-turned-theologian-and-poet taught a course in Christian Education. His name is Herb Brokering, and back then he had written a book of modern day parables that focused attention precisely on this connection between Easter and Christmas.

Many of Herb's parables were recollections of things that happened during his life as a parish pastor, before he became a famous theologian-and-poet who took up teaching at seminaries. In the parable I have in mind, Herb told how the group that was in charge of preparing Holy Communion at Easter had it gift-wrapped with colorful Christmas wrapping paper, lots of red ribbon, and a big red bow. When the congregation gathered for worship on Easter, they wondered what this great big Christmas present was doing in the Chancel on Easter, and what is more, they wondered what was in it? Perhaps it was a giant Easter lily announcing that spring had sprung. Perhaps it was the folded linen clothes left behind when the tomb was found empty on that first Easter morn. Speaking about Easter morning, perhaps it was a big take-out order of hot cross buns, enough for everyone to enjoy a delicious Easter breakfast!

Herb reported that everyone could hardly wait until it was opened. When they saw the bread and wine inside, they could hardly wait to eat it. It was better than the jolt that comes with Starbucks coffee, better even than the sweet taste of hot cross buns. These give a buzz that is at best temporary. With the bread and the wine of Holy Communion, we receive the gift of the new life that lasts forever. That's the promise of God's love and the gift of Christ's life given for us on the Cross. "This is my body given for you." "This is my blood shed for you." These words took on new meaning with the victory of life over death proclaimed with the Good News of Resurrection, telling us that nothing can separate us from the embrace of God's love. Nothing can come between the love God gives and the life that's ours through Jesus Christ. That's the Good News of Easter, the truth we trust as we eat the bread and drink the wine of Holy Communion. As Herb said, "It was Easter Sunday; and it was the best Christmas they ever had on Easter."

Holy Week arrives with Palm Sunday on April 1st. Our many services are intended to help us remember what our Lord did to accomplish the miracle of our salvation. We're invited to join with Christians of every denominational family around the world in marking our Lord's suffering with lives that desire to do more than merely recollect distant facts from long ago. Our heartfelt hope is that we will learn to live lives that bear witness to the faith that is in us by sharing the love God gives so freely through the life, death, and resurrection of Christ our Lord. To that end, I urge you to join us – morning, noon, and night – when services are offered that allow you to grow in the love we share through the grace God has given in our life together at Zion.

CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

Jim Fidler called our meeting to order on time, with an opening devotion offered by Brian Milek. Also present were Juanita Cignetti, Dave Palumbo, Vicki Givler, Mark Votaw, Beth Shaheen, Cathy Harvey, Renee Keith, and Pastor Sherwindt. Lorin Beaber and Dale Jacobs were unable to attend.

The Treasurer's Report confirmed that we have enjoyed back-to-back surplus months in January and February. All the news on the financial front is good news. Utility bills and snow-plowing bills were down; and income was up. We anticipate that all will remain well in March and April as we move through Lent to Holy Week and Easter.

ZION'S FINANCIAL FACTS: FEBRUARY

Income for February	22,478.14
Expenses in February	<u>22,195.33</u>
February's Surplus	282.81
Year-to-Date Income	46,667.07
Year-to-Date Expenses	<u>44,110.51</u>
Year-to-Date Surplus	2,556.56

Last year's monthly deficit for February was a whopper, in the red by \$7,153.31! This year we enjoyed a \$282.81 surplus. Last year's year-to-date deficit after two months of difficult winter weather was a whopping \$11,012.45! Our year-to-date surplus this year is \$2,556.56! That is a year-to-year turn-around of \$13,569.01!

Some of this is certainly due to our mild winter; but most of it is due to your very generous support of *Early Bird Giving*. This combination has allowed us to enjoy a very strong start to 2012; and for that...

WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

MORE COUNCIL NEWS

Caring Ministry: Cathy Harvey has been supporting Jayne Schrader and Beth Willis as these members have worked hard to make sure that there is strong transitional leadership in place as we continue the ministry of our Food Pantry and Clothing Closet. So far everything has really gone well, and we are quite confident that these ministries will continue to do great work.

Resource Ministry: Mark Votaw reported that we have had a great response from both members of the congregation and members of the Church Council to our plan for Early Bird Giving. As we approach the end of the first quarter, we have acknowledged \$3,000 in Advanced Giving, received \$3,000 from Council members, and \$6,000 from congregational members. All in all, we have to say this effort has been very well received.

Mutual Ministry: Brian Milek reported that the members of Mutual Ministry – Lorraine Weinman, Blair Woodside, Kay Davis, Jim Fidler, and Pastor Sherwindt – embraced a ministry mission statement and set a schedule for the year. Put simply, our mission is to foster the continuing spiritual development of our leaders and staff by listening, sharing, and planning the means to advance the mission of our congregation.

Bicentennial Task Force: Our planning has begun as we prepare for the celebration of our bicentennial anniversary in appointing five members to this task force: Darlene Milavickas, Brian Walters, Carol Rossbach, Chuck Danner, and Jim Fidler. We will appoint more members as our plans require. We share our founding date with Zion United Church of Christ in 1814; and 2014 will see us doing much together as we celebrate the long history God has given us.

STILL MORE COUNCIL NEWS

Property Ministry: Lorin Beaber reported that the parsonage looks to be holding up rather well, and that the patch work on the roof seems to have stopped the leak. We have begun the process of reviewing our rental agreements to make sure that no updates are required or advised. These agreements cover the ongoing arrangements we enjoy with Midwest Services (and the parsonage), the Bixler Pre-School, and Senior Independence.

Worship Ministry: Our Lenten dinners have been delicious, and we thank the Men of Zion, the Chancel Guild, the Senior Choir & Praise Team, the Church Council, and the Youth of Zion for some extraordinary meals, which have been the prelude to a series of very enjoyable services. We thank Jim Fidler for his portrayal of Saint Peter to start us off on the first Sunday evening in Lent. Pastor Sherwindt then followed with a sermon on the disciples as radical revolutionaries who really did change the world. The Senior Choir and Praise Team filled our evening on the third Sunday in Lent with beautiful music and powerful anthems. Jim Fidler returned on the fourth Sunday with a powerful portrayal of Caiaphas in his attempt to save his nation from the wrath of Rome that local Zealots would surely invite. Finally, as is our custom on the fifth Sunday evening in Lent, the youth of Zion did an exceptional job in leading us through the passion narrative as told by the Gospel of Mark. We extend our thanks to all. We are now approaching the start of Holy Week, which culminates with *the Great Triduum*, the church's historic remembrance of the three holiest days on the Christian calendar, from the evening of Maundy Thursday through to the close of day on Easter Sunday. Set these days aside, and plan to join us for the services we offer.

HONOR THE GREAT TRIDUUM

Holy Week begins with Palm Sunday on April 1st. Zion offers two very different services, both of which begin with waving our palm branches during the Palm Sunday Parade. It has also become our custom at Zion to feature the Children's Easter Play on Palm Sunday. This year the Sunday School will present *A BANNER EASTER* at the 10:30 a.m. service. Palm Sunday is a festive beginning to a week that quickly turns somber as we head toward the crucial three days of *the Great Triduum*.

We offer two services on Maundy Thursday, Quiet Communion at Noon, which features the story of *The Ragman*, and our gathering again at 7:00 p.m., when we complete the gesture we began with the imposition of ashes on Ash Wednesday. Back then it was the mark of the cross: *Remember that you are dust and to dust you shall return*. On Maundy Thursday it is prayers for healing and the anointing with oil: *I lay my hands upon you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, beseeching him to uphold you, to fill you with his grace, that you may know the healing power of his love*. This service can touch our spirits and build our faith, as we pray for the gift of healing for those whom we love, and prepare for the unfolding drama of God's love that leads through the stripping of the Chancel to the Cross of Good Friday.

The *Stations of the Cross* lays out the journey, and the *Tenebrae* leads into the darkness of death. There are no words to describe the power of that pall that is cast by the shadows falling from the Cross on Good Friday. This moment prepares us for the curiosity Mary displays, which blossoms into full-blown joy with the Good News that Christ is risen! That moment changed Mary, the disciples, and the world forever. May God be praised! Amen

HOLY WEEK ARRIVES WITH PALM SUNDAY AND THE GREAT TRIDUUM

Ash Wednesday Reminds Us of the Curse of Our Mortality

REMEMBER THAT YOU ARE DUST, AND TO DUST YOU SHALL RETURN

**(APRIL 1)
PALM SUNDAY**

8:00 a.m.

Our Traditional Liturgical Service
The Palm Sunday Parade at 8:00 a.m.
Jim Fidler’s portrayal of *Caiaphas*
Ain’t No Rock Gonna’ Shout for Me!

10:30 a.m.

Palm Sunday Parade & Choral Anthem
We feature our Children’s Easter Play
Let’s Have A Banner EASTER!
Zion’s Praise Team leads our Worship

**(APRIL 5)
MAUNDY THURSDAY**

12:00 p.m.

A Service with Prayers for Healing
Yes, Listen to *The Ragman* at Noon
Quiet Communion at the Noon Service

7:00 p.m.

The Celebration of Holy Communion
After Giving Thanks, Remember Me
Worship ends by Stripping the Chancel

**(APRIL 6)
GOOD FRIDAY**

12:00 p.m.

Our Ecumenical *Stations of the Cross*
The Chapel at Walsh University
North Canton Ministerial Association

7:30 p.m.

Zion’s Historic TENEBRAE Service
Senior Choir sings *Were You There?*
Special Readings & Special Music

**(APRIL 8)
EASTER**

8:00 a.m.

Our Traditional Festival Worship
Christ the Lord Is Risen Today!

9:15 a.m.

Zion’s Annual Easter Egg Hunt
Great Fun for Kids of All Ages!

10:30 a.m.

Blended Service of Heartfelt Praise
Zion’s Praise Team leads Worship

CHRIST IS RISEN! HE IS RISEN, INDEED! ALLELUIA!

Easter Proclaims the Triumph of God's Life over Our Death!

GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL



UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- Saturday, March 31:** Children's Easter Program Dress Rehearsal in the morning at 10:00 a.m.
Sunday, April 1: The Children's Easter Program during the 10:30 a.m. Worship Service
EASTER, April 8: Our Children's Easter Egg Hunt for all ages during Sunday School
Sunday, May 13: 10th Annual Mother's Day Breakfast between the Services in Memorial Hall

CHILDREN'S EASTER PLAY: A BANNER EASTER!

We are looking forward to *A Banner EASTER*, which is this year's Easter program scheduled to be presented on Palm Sunday, which is Sunday, April 1st. All of us are invited to watch as our Sunday School kids use the Scriptures and other important words to show us what Easter is all about. In addition to expressing our appreciation for all the children who help with this annual production, we want to extend a big thank you to Emma and Jacob Parkomaki for all of their help with this year's props!



Again, as has become our custom, the Easter Program will be performed on Palm Sunday at the 10:30 a.m. service only. We will have dress rehearsal on Saturday, March 31st, at 10:00 a.m., which will be followed by a Pizza Party to celebrate everyone's hard work. We plan to be finished by 12:30 p.m. We are sure that everyone will enjoy the pizza party on Saturday, and we are looking forward to another great performance by Zion's amazing kids!



We will have our annual Children's Easter Egg Hunt between the services on Easter Sunday, which is April 8th. Children of all ages are invited to go on an Easter Egg Hunt for over five hundred eggs filled with goodies and surprises. They will hunt for eggs all over the church and outside if the weather permits. Please have your children bring an Easter Basket on Easter morning. We will meet in the Narthex at 9:15 a.m., when the hunt will begin. Afterwards, we will be ready with donuts, milk, and juice as our Easter Celebration continues. We have some exciting and fun Easter games planned for everyone who joins us on Easter Sunday.

Our older youth are once again invited to help us hide the eggs on Easter Sunday at 8:30 a.m., to assist with the Easter Egg Hunt during the Sunday School hour, and then to join in the fun of snacks and games after that. Thank you to everyone who donated candy and other items for the eggs. We really appreciate your support! And a big thank you goes out to the High School and Catechism classes, and their leaders, for filling the five hundred or so eggs that help make the hunt maddeningly fun for all!

MORE GOOD NEWS FOR THE YOUTH OF ZION

A HEARTFELT THANK YOU TO OUR YOUTH AND THEIR FAMILIES

Thank you to all of the youth and their families for another great Lenten dinner! All of us really appreciate the dedication of our youth and their families when it comes to hosting dinner and leading worship on the fifth Sunday evening in Lent. Special thanks go out to Jeff Frank for taking the lead in preparing our dinner with the delicious main course! Pulled pork sandwiches, mac & cheese, an assortment of salads, and a wide array of desserts were enjoyed by all. We also want to thank all of the youth and their families for contributing food, and for helping to set up, serve, and clean up afterward. We are so lucky to have such a great group of families that are always willing to pitch in and help! Our thanks to Debbie & Dean, Jeff & Connie, Laura, Beth, Steve & Darla, Brian & Nikki, John, Loretta, and Lorin & Tina.

From a delicious dinner in Memorial Hall, we moved into the Sanctuary for yet another of our excellent devotional services, this one a reading of the Passion narrative from the Gospel of Mark. Zion's Sunday School children, Confirmation class, High School youth, and young adults helped with the reading. We extend our thanks to Marissa Keating, Brooke Roman, Lya Milek, Carley Frank, Jaret Beaber, Mallory Rhodes, Brooke Stout, Natalie Henderson, Ben Sir Louis, Marissa Hilson, Eric Dague, Weston Milek, Grant Beaber, Nathan Fox, Kat Milek, Jeremy Fox, Christopher Thompson, Justin Dague, AJ Edwardo, Marcus Rhodes, Cassie Frank, and David Panzarello. What a cast! Thanks, too, to the adults who helped, especially, Debbie Fox, Laura Thompson, Beth Willis, and Marilyn Espe-Sherwindt. Everyone did a great job. Thank you to all for providing a great end to our schedule of Sunday Evening Lenten Programs.

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESUMES ITS REGULAR SCHEDULE

We altered the schedule for Sunday School during Lent to get ready for our Easter Play, and added an extended rehearsal schedule on the weekend of Palm Sunday. Our children's Sunday School classes are cancelled on Easter because of the Easter Egg Hunt that day. The Sunday School will resume its normal schedule beginning on Sunday, April 15. Sunday School classes start at 9:15 a.m. and end at 10:15 a.m. Our children will continue to learn important lessons in class, along with enjoying crafts, games, and lots of snacks. See you there; and bring a friend!

THE FINAL TALLY FOR THIS YEAR'S ACME RECEIPTS

Because of your attention and support, we received a total of \$246.16 from Acme this year to support our youth programming. This is one of our best years yet, and exceeds last year's best by almost \$20.00! Thank you so much to everyone for your support!

WE MARK "END MALARIA DAY" ON SUNDAY, APRIL 29

While the world will mark *Malaria Day* is Wednesday, April 25th, the Northeastern Ohio Synod asks that we turn our focus to ending malaria on Sunday, April 29th, making further progress toward the Synod's goal of raising \$250,000 in leading the ELCA's global efforts to end malaria now. Zion is very close to reaching our goal of \$2,250 in large part because our youth pitched in to help in raising \$2,000 last summer. Let's finish the job our youth have started with a special offering aimed at raising the \$250 left to go. Thank you for your interest and support.

MEN OF ZION NEWS

The Men of Zion will meet for a Bible study on the Monday after Easter, April 9th. We will begin at 7:00 p.m. in Luther Hall. Brian Milek will take the lead in this new effort to build our men's ministry at Zion. As many already know, the Men of Zion host Advent and Lenten dinners, established and sustain our annual Mother's Day Breakfast, and even created a successful fundraiser focused on fathers with Zion's Prime Rib Dinner. But in addition to "doing things" that make Zion stronger, we also want to "build up" the Men of Zion spiritually.

Of course, we don't want to scare our men off with this focus on growing spiritually; so in addition to scheduling a Bible study, we also need to spend time planning for our 10th Annual Mother's Day Breakfast, which is set for the morning of May 13th this year. Even though we've done a Mother's Day Breakfast a time or two already, it still takes planning, and now's the time to begin that planning. So, plan to join us on Monday, April 9th.

THE WOMEN OF ZION

This year's theme continues with our study *To Follow and To Serve: the Gospel of Mark*. With Holy Week upon us, Session 8 takes up the Passion Narrative in Mark, with 14:28 as our theme verse: "*After I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.*" Two important themes are raised: first, that the resurrection is coming; and second, that the kingdom of God will not be focused on a royal family in Jerusalem, but on the mission to Galilee and beyond. But before getting to our meeting Jesus in Galilee, it is important that we not miss his journey to the Cross. That will be the focus of April's study, as well as our focus with worship on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter morning.

The Gospel of Mark ends on a note of silence and inaction. When the women went to the tomb, they wondered how to roll away the stone. Then, when they found the stone rolled away, they wondered whether they should go inside. When they went inside and found the tomb empty, they wondered what to do next. Mark describes what happened: "*They went out and fled. Trembling and astonishment came upon them, and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid.*" Someone broke the silence: we are the evidence of that. This is a great month to join us as we learn how to be God's Easter people. Our *Women's Bible Study* meets on **Tuesday, April 17**, in the Resource Center at 9:30 a.m. Please join us.

Zion's Comfort Givers meet on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month, **April 12 & 26**, beginning at 9:30 a.m. in Luther Hall. We can really use your help, so surprise us with your presence. You'll enjoy the coffee and conversation; but mostly you'll enjoy being filled with the feeling of knowing that we're helping others through the good we do.

THANK YOU'S TO ZION

Dear members of Zion's Senior Choir,

Thank you so much for your generous donation to the Lake Center Christian School Vocal Department in memory of Neva Locker. We do so appreciate it.

*Sincerely,
Janet Eddins, Chairperson
Vocal Department*

Lake Center Christian School in Hartville assists Christian families and their churches in equipping students for life-long learning and service to Christ, offering an accredited K to 12 education centered in Jesus Christ. Their Vocal Department was one of the many organizations that filled the long list of commitments to which Fred Locker's mother Neva had devoted her time and talents in retirement.

Dear Women of Zion,

Thank you for your gift to Lutheran World Relief's Quilt & Kit Shipping Fund. Your kind support sends gifts of God's love to places like Sierra Leone, where years of war have left most people below the poverty line. The country is so poor that hospitals cannot offer bedding to patients. Because of people like you and the contributions you make to the Quilt & Kit Shipping Fund, we can send quilts to Sierra Leone to comfort the sick. Bishop Thomas J. Barnett of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sierra Leone explains, "For those who have absolutely nothing we provide them with warmth using your quilts." Thank you so much for your support. Please accept our heartfelt thanks for your gift. Your support keeps this ministry going strong.

*In Christ's peace,
John A. Nunes, CEO
Lutheran World Relief*

SOME IMPORTANT EVENTS

April in Paris: The Canton-Massillon Cluster of NEOSWO (the Northeastern Ohio Synod Women's Organization) has scheduled their Spring Gathering for Saturday, April 21st, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at Israel's Lutheran Church in Paris, Ohio. The theme is *April in Paris ... Bold Women Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*. The Bible Study Leader will be the Rev. Tim Muse, Pastor of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Alliance. There will be an *In-Kind Offering* of non-perishable items for the Paris Food Pantry, baby quilts for area agencies, or lap robes for St. Luke residents. Lunch is prepared by the Women of Israel's Lutheran Church. The Offering at worship will be divided between the Paris Food Pantry and NEOSWO. Registration and lunch is \$7.00. Please register by April 14th. Please contact Betty Tracy with your interest. (We already have several women from Zion who are planning to enjoy this *April in Paris*, and others are welcome to join in the fun.)

Courageous Conversations: Our neighbors at Senior Independence Adult Day Center, which shares our building Monday through Friday, will host a workshop presented by Verna Homan, RN, CHPN, right here at Zion on Thursday, April 26, at 7:00 p.m. This will be an opportunity to consider how to start those difficult discussions with loved ones that require that we talk about the future requirements of our health care needs. Who should know about your wishes and the wishes of your loved ones? Are special forms involved or required? Come and join our good neighbors at Senior Independence as we discuss these important topics, or just to enjoy the coffee and desserts! It will be both fun and informative. Please RSVP Alex Scott at 330-498-0424 by April 18th.

GOOD NEWS FROM ZION'S FOOD PANTRY

(Jayne Schrader, Transitional Team Leader)

Zion has been growing the ministry of our Food Pantry for almost a dozen years. Not long after we opened our doors to serve nearby neighbors with pressing needs for food, we realized that we could supplement our efforts to help the families we were serving through the food pantry with the ministry of a clothing closet. Karen Kirk was the first of our members to lend a hand in overseeing our clothing closet, with Edna Smith and Betty Tracy offering their help from time to time. Peg Thomas and Shirley Horton have also had their hands in helping with this ministry. Becky Aquilo is presently the member who tries to make sure that this ministry continues to contribute to the families we are serving through our Food Pantry.

With Shirley Cavender and Margaret Porter deciding that ten years of hands-on oversight of Zion's Food Pantry was more than enough love for service to fill a lifetime of *growing in love and service by grace*, the need to shift into transitional mode entered high gear as March began. On behalf of Cathy Harvey and Beth Willis, who have joined in as members of our transitional team, I can say with complete confidence – and shared shock – that no one is ever ready for what they are about to experience when they enter into the time zone of Zion's Food Pantry. Everything moves faster. Time flies, whether you are having fun, or just trying to keep up.

As the Church Office Secretary, I am in the office on Mondays through Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. I have been in the office on Tuesday mornings for the past two years, greeting the volunteers that come to help, but I never realized what it takes to get ready for the hour between 1:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. when the families come to make their way around the tables set up in the gym with the food our Food Pantry provides. I have got to confess that I was quite surprised on my first day working with the Food Pantry Crew at how much hustle and bustle goes on to prepare for the 50 to 60 families that need our help the first and third Tuesdays of the month.

Beth, Cathy, and I are so thankful for all of the regular volunteers who make our Food Pantry work so well. They have been such a help and a blessing. They know the routine, and as soon as they arrive in the morning all of them get to work sorting food, checking dates on the canned goods, and evaluating any other food items that have come in, loading the shopping carts with the food items that are put on tables in the gym, arranged neatly for the families we hope to help. As soon as the van gets back from picking up our order from the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank (in Akron), our volunteers are ready at the door with shopping carts to help unload and organize these additional items as we get ready to open our doors for service.

Once 1:00 p.m. arrives, the real fun begins and everyone has a role they have come to embrace. Whether it is greeting the families and making sure they fill out the proper paperwork, getting the carts ready for them to make their way around the tables, or being behind the tables to assist them with the food that is being given out, it is like a well-oiled machine. After being a part of this great day only a few times so far, I know that none of this could happen without our great volunteers. It is a miracle in action, where seeing the food that is given and the love that is shared makes us thankful for what God helps us to do as members of our church family at Zion. I invite you to come and see what happens here on the first and third Tuesdays of every month.