

## GREETINGS FROM THE PASTOR:

The announcements were made. The invitations were sent. The schedule was set. Our groups were prepared. Sign-up sheets were in place. Everything was ready to go. Then came the snow, and the cold, and more snow, and more cold. School systems throughout the area declared another record number of snow days and cold days, even though the worst of the weather held out for weekends, and especially Sundays! Sunday mornings in Lent left lots of room between worshipers in all the pews. While attendance lagged, and didn't quite reach the goals we set, as it turned out, our Sunday evening Lenten services were actually the best attended of our three services on Sundays! The food was good; the support was there; and we thanked God for our friends and members who make up the community of faithful here at Zion Lutheran Church.

Actually, the food was better than good. Zion's Church Council, with Dave Palumbo taking the lead behind the scenes and Mark Votaw at the helm in the kitchen on Sunday, joined by a great group of volunteers who had signed up to provide soups, chili, and whatever else thrives in a crock pot, provided award-winning cuisine, which, thanks be to God, is par for the course here at Zion. Besides soups and sandwiches, we enjoyed plenty of desserts, and lots of leftovers. The Youth of Zion then provided everything we needed to remember why we were here, to hear the Passion Narrative, which reorients our view of love and transforms our vision of God. All in all, we enjoyed a satisfying First Sunday in Lent. We thank the Church Council, the Youth of Zion, our Senior Choir, and the many members who volunteered to help. It was a great start.

The Second Sunday in Lent continued this story of good friends, great food, and a deep sense of gratitude for the effort put forth by Zion's Chancel Guild in turning soups and sandwiches into another exceptional Lenten dinner. Nothing was missing. We were amazed by how many of our members took advantage of an evening opportunity to worship on a bitterly cold, windy, and snowy Sunday. Jon and Barb Elsass offered special music. Ed Hauck brought our organ to life, yet again. Pastor Sherwindt surprised us with a sermon, which is a change for Sunday evenings. He spoke about the Cleavers, from *Leave It to Beaver*, but mostly about Eddie Haskell, and how fortunate it is that God does not call us to look back on the good old days for what it means to be faithful. God calls us to meet Him in the future, with His promise to make all things new!

What made this news particularly good and timely was the course of a week that included a service celebrating the life of Ellis Le Beau. Many of us know that name, and cannot say the name Ellis without also thinking of Anna Mae, the love of his life for just shy of sixty-five years of wedded bliss. Family and friends worried about how Ellis would do without his better half; and all were surprised that he did just fine, because of God's sustaining faithfulness, his own strength of character, and the love of so many surrounding and supporting him. Yet, all of us also knew that not one day – of the one thousand, nine hundred and sixty-seven days that had passed since Anna Mae's passing – passed without Ellis looking forward to God's promised reunion with the love of his life in heaven. Hope keeps us looking forward to the future, where God will greet us with the promise to continue making all things new. As Andy Dufresne told Red at the end of *Shawshank Redemption*, "Hope is a good thing, maybe the best of things, and no good thing ever dies." That's God's promise; and our hope, a hope that will not disappoint.

## CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

Mark Votaw called our February meeting to order at 7:01 p.m. Randy Cizek, Social Outreach Ministry Elder, led devotions. Also present were Carol Rossbach, Dave Palumbo, Dale Jacobs, Heather Hoffman, Jim Fidler, Randy Cizek, Pastor Sherwindt. Todd Elsass and Renee Keith were excused. We were focused and busy, concluding our meeting with adjournment at 8:01 p.m.

We reviewed some of the details about membership activity in 2014, and then turned our attention to reviewing the schedule for Lenten dinners and services for February and March. We also discussed issues related to our long-term relationship with the men who rent the parsonage coming to an end. We'll need to make sure that all transitions go smoothly, as we continue to think about what comes next.

The Treasurer's Report reminded us that winter has thus far been very costly with higher utility bills and more calls for snow-plowing and salting. While we ended 2014 with another year of our budget in balance, mission support high, and property projects paid for, January's expenses exceed our operating budget income, leaving us with a monthly deficit as we begin the new year.

### **FINANCIAL FACTS FOR JANUARY**

January's Income	\$ 16,884.64
January's Expenses	\$ 17,861.77
<b>January's (Deficit)</b>	<b>\$ (977.13)</b>
Our Accumulated Surplus	\$13,717.09
Bicentennial Projects Fund	\$12,421.78
Advanced Giving for 2015	\$ 9,000.00
The Youth of Zion Fund	\$ 7,441.97
The Food Pantry Fund	\$ 6,842.89

***We thank you for your generous support!***

## PROPERTY MINISTRY NEWS

**Property Ministry Update:** The four men who have rented the parsonage since 2002 made their move to more modest lodgings during the cold and snow of February. The utilities were transferred into our name, a cursory inspection indicated that everything looked as we expected and hoped, and the trustees began the conversation about what should come next. We have also heard from Council that progress is being made in providing a fuller account of what, if any restrictions, might affect how we think about the future of the parsonage. The plan is to have more information available at our Congregational Meeting in May or June.

When it comes to Senior Independence, their movers were more amenable to waiting for the snow and cold to give way to better weather. Their furniture remains in what was once the Youth Room; with plans to move out around March 16. In the meantime, our Youth Missions Craft Show organizers are relishing the absolute ease with which we will be able to use that space for craft show purposes. We certainly have a lot to think about as we move ahead without these two long-term rental partners; but we are confident that God will provide, opening doors where opportunities for service can advance the cause of the kingdom and the work of our church.

By the way, just in case you haven't heard, an open invitation is extended to all retirees who would like to meet with our Retirees Club on Thursday mornings at the church. We provide no breakfast, no seminars, just coffee and the opportunity to work with us on projects at the church that need attention. Carl & the Gang enjoy the work, and they would surely welcome your presence.

## MORE COUNCIL NEWS

We may have given up the lavish dinners that were the signature feature of Zion’s Sunday evening cuisine, but no one’s taste buds suffered. Dave Palumbo took the lead in preparing luscious Lenten sandwiches on our First Sunday Evening in Lent, and other Council members, together with interested volunteers from the congregation, provided exceptional soups, stews, and chili, all dishes that are synonymous with crock pot.

On the Second Sunday Evening in Lent, the Chancel Guild tolerated no let down. The soups were exceptional; the chili had some kick; and the shredded chicken sandwiches were top notch. Our worship moved in an unusual direction when we heard a sermon that had references to ISIS, Vatican I, and Eddie Haskell. It was another memorable Sunday at Zion, with good fellowship, great food, and enjoyable worship.

We now look forward to the Senior Choir, Praise Team, and the Food Pantry Crew helping with dinner on March 8<sup>th</sup>, the Youth of Zion taking the lead on March 15<sup>th</sup>, and then the Men of Zion unleashing wholesale surprises with their efforts on March 22<sup>nd</sup>. You are all invited. Everyone is welcome. So, please join us. You’ll be glad you did.

### FINANCIAL FACTS FOR FEBRUARY

February’s Income	\$ 18,946.04
February’s Expenses	\$ 19,409.34
<b>February’s (Deficit)</b>	<b>\$ (463.30)</b>
Year-to-date Income	\$ 43,830.68
Year-to-date Expenses	\$ 45,271.11
<b>Year-to-date (Deficit)</b>	<b>\$ (1,440.43)</b>
Our Year-to-date Utilities	\$ 5,395.64
Snow Plowing & Salting	\$ 2,772.00

***We thank you for your generous support!***

## AN EARLY BIRD PARTY

January and February greeted us with arctic cold, and, for the most part, did not let up. It’s been a very long time since we’ve seen utility bills like the bills we received so far this year. Fortunately, Zion’s members have heard our call, and *Early Bird Giving* has materialized even without all the razzmatazz of an all-out fundraising drive. We have run monthly deficits in January and February; but they were far less than they might have been without *Early Bird Giving*. Our year-to-date deficit is just short of \$1,500.00. We hope to make up that ground in March. One way of doing that is to throw a party, which is exactly what we are going to do! Dean Yoder has secured the Rittman High School Steel Drum Band; Council has bought and donated 150 tickets to distribute free of charge for a **Steel Drum Band Concert** scheduled for Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, at 4:30 p.m., which will be followed by soup and sandwiches, and desserts galore, served by the Men of Zion. Council members passed the hat and raised \$750 for 150 tickets. All the money goes to Early Bird Giving. It’s Council’s way of saying thank you, while also encouraging more of us to join in the fun of putting winter – and winter’s bills – behind us. That’s the Fifth Sunday in Lent, March 22<sup>nd</sup>, when we will schedule the special music of the Steel Drum Band at 4:30 p.m., and our Lenten dinner at the usual time, 5:30 p.m. It will be very enjoyable and a whole lot of fun.

### **BE HERE AND BE HAPPY!**

Rittman High Steel Drum Band  
 With Mr. Ed Sims, Director  
**Where:** Zion Lutheran Church  
**When:** March 22, at 4:30 p.m.

## THE SCHEDULE FOR LENT AND HOLY WEEK AT ZION

<b>March 1, Sunday</b>	8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. 5:30 p.m. 6:15 p.m.	<b>Lent 2, FAITH, HOPE &amp; LOVE ABIDE</b> Dinner hosted by the Chancel Guild Special Music by Jon & Barb Elsass
<b>March 8, Sunday</b>	8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. 5:30 p.m. 6:15 p.m.	<b>Lent 3, DOES LAW OR GOSPEL SAVE?</b> Dinner is hosted by SC, PT, and FPC Special Music & Much, Much More!
<b>March 15, Sunday</b>	8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. 5:30 p.m. 6:15 p.m.	<b>Lent 4, THE LOOK OF LOVE: JOHN 3:16</b> Dinner is hosted by the Youth of Zion Special Music & Much, Much More!
<b>March 22, Sunday</b>	8:00 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. <b>4:30 p.m.</b> <b>5:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Lent 5, THE PROMISE OF TRUE LIFE</b> <b>A Steel Drum Band Concert at Zion!</b> <b>Great Food Served: The Men of Zion</b> <b>Please Note the Service Time Change</b>
<b>March 28, Saturday</b>	10:30 a.m.	Easter Play Rehearsal in the Sanctuary
<b>March 29, Palm Sunday</b>	8:00 a.m. 9:15 a.m. 10:30 a.m.	<b>Traditional Liturgical Passion Sunday</b> <b>Soul Keeping in Luther Hall: Join Us!</b> <b>Zion's Sunday School Easter Program</b>
<b>April 2, Maundy Thursday</b>	7:30 p.m.	<b>"Do This In Remembrance Of Me"</b> <b>Holy Communion &amp; Special Music</b>
<b>April 3, Good Friday</b>	12:00 p.m.  7:30 p.m.	<b>Our Stations of the Cross Service</b> <b>An Ecumenical Community Service</b> <b>The Chapel at Walsh University</b>  <b>Zion's Historic TENEBRAE Service</b> <b>Dramatic Readings, Special Music</b> <b>Zion Lutheran Church at 7:30 p.m.</b>
<b>April 5, Easter Sunday</b>	8:00 a.m. 9:15 a.m. 10:30 a.m.	<b>Easter Festival Worship at Zion</b> <b>Traditional Service, the Senior Choir</b> <b>Our Annual Easter Egg Hunt at Zion</b> <b>Easter Festival Worship at Zion</b> <b>Blended Service, Zion's Praise Team</b>

GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL**Happy Birthday to:**UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

**Sunday, March 15th:** Youth of Zion host our Lenten Dinner and help lead our Lenten Service  
**Saturday, March 28:** Children's Easter Program Dress Rehearsal followed by our Pizza Party  
**Palm Sunday, March 29:** Children's Easter Program during the 10:30 a.m. Worship Service  
**Easter Sunday, April 5:** Our Children's Easter Egg Hunt for all ages during Sunday School  
**Sunday, May 3rd:** FEED THE NEED HUNGER WALK, Meet at Community Christian Church  
**Pentecost, May 24th:** We celebrate the Rite of Confirmation for Summer, Kat, and Mallory!  
**Week of July 13 – 17:** VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL at Zion Lutheran Church, 9:00 a.m. to Noon

SUNDAY SCHOOL: PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE 6

Sunday School classes during March will continue to meet at the regular time, 9:15 a.m. We will have some class time and time to practice for our Easter program. Please join us!

This year's Easter Program, *A Word on the Resurrection*, is set for Palm Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>, at the 10:30 a.m. service. This program is based on John's Gospel; it is a re-enactment describing biblical events from finding of the empty tomb to the appearances of Jesus to his disciples. We will have dress rehearsal on Saturday, March 28, which will be followed by a pizza party to celebrate all of the children's hard work. Again, we will practice this month for half of the Sunday School hour, and the other half will be the normal Sunday School lesson. There are many roles available for all ages – speaking, non-speaking, and assisting with costumes and props. We are looking forward to another great performance by Zion's amazing kids!



This month we are also collecting Easter candy and small items that will fit into our plastic eggs for one of Zion's favorite traditions: the Children's Easter Egg Hunt on Easter Sunday during Sunday School. Children of all ages are invited to go on our Easter Egg Hunt. We typically hide over 500 eggs (both inside and out). If you'd like to donate any items for the eggs, please leave them in the Church Office by Sunday, March 29<sup>th</sup>. Our older youth (Catechism and High School classes) are invited to help us fill the eggs during Sunday School this month, hide them on Easter Sunday at 8:30 a.m., and assist with the Easter Egg Hunt at 9:15 a.m. We really appreciate everyone's support of this great activity that the children look forward to each year.

THANKS YOU FOR YOUR ACME RECEIPTS!

Thank you for bringing in your ACME receipts during this year's program. We appreciate your support! We will be receiving a check for just about \$230.<sup>00</sup> to help our youth. The program has ended for this school year and will start again in the fall. Thanks again for all of your support!

MORE GREAT NEWS FOR ZION'S YOUTH**YOUTH LENTEN DINNER: SUNDAY, MARCH 15**

Zion's Youth, their families, and our Youth Leaders will host the Lenten dinner on Sunday, March 15<sup>th</sup>, at 5:30 p.m. The kids and their families will be serving a wonderful meal of soups, sandwiches, and lots of fabulous desserts. All who would like to sign up to bring a crock pot of soup or chili are welcome to use the sign up sheets in Luther Hall. We will be contacting our youth and their families to ask for donations of buns, desserts and drinks. We will need lots of help, and, as always, we appreciate everyone's support!

**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: JULY 13 – 17**

The dates are set! We are currently working on our theme and the details of this year's Vacation Bible School program. We wanted to give you the dates so you can mark them down on your calendars. We will need lots of help! So please let Debbie Fox know if you are interested in helping. There will be more information coming in the next few editions of *The Zion Herald!*

**THE 2015 STARK COUNTY HUNGER WALK**

**FEED THE NEED**  
**Stark County Hunger Walk**  
**May 3rd, 2015**

Did you know that 269 people participated in the first Stark Hunger Walk in 2014? This fund-raising walk benefits all the food distribution sites in the Stark County area who rely on the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank for the groceries they give out to those in need. Every penny raised by this walk goes to the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank. The good news is that last year brought in a grand total of \$9,820.16 and 767 pounds of food.

All of us at Zion are no strangers to the grim news that hunger affects one in seven people in our communities. That's right: 1 in 7! We can make a difference by participating in this kid-friendly, pet-friendly walk of 2.1 miles on sidewalks in North Canton.

Our partners at Community Christian Church are taking the lead in organizing this effort. This is our chance to become some of their biggest supporters in getting a large group of youth and adults to walk alongside of our friends at Community Christian to raise funds for a great cause.

**Date of Walk:** Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, at 3:00 p.m.

**Starting location:** Community Christian Church, 210 North Main Street, North Canton

**Pre-walk activities:** Registration (indoors), music by the Storyville Stompers Dixieland Band, Face painting, Veggie cups & chips, WHBC live-broadcast, Group picture before walk, Ribbon cutting by the North Canton Mayor to begin the walk.

**Post-walk festivities:** An Interfaith Soup Social inside the spacious hall at Community Christian Church.

Mark your calendars for Sunday, May 3<sup>rd</sup>, and plan to either walk or support those who walk with a generous donation.



TAKING A BREAK FROM THE WINTER BLUES

**THE RITTMAN HIGH SCHOOL STEEL DRUM BAND**

**IN CONCERT HERE AT ZION ON MARCH 22ND**

**BEGINNING IN THE SANCTUARY AT 4:30 PM**

**OUR LENTEN DINNER TO FOLLOW, 5:30 PM**

**SOUP, SANDWICHES, AND DESSERTS GALORE!**



## Sounds of the Caribbean III

Don't miss the hottest celebration of the  
year, Mahn!

**Come and experience the warm, rhythmic sounds of  
the Rittman High School Steel Drum Band,  
under the direction of Mr. Ed Sims!**



**WHERE: Zion Lutheran Church**

**WHEN: Sunday, March 22nd**

**TIME: 4:30 p.m. in the Sanctuary**

**With our Lenten Dinner to follow!**

**Soups, Sandwiches, Desserts**

**A Great Evening of Great Fun!**

**Tickets are just \$5.00 per person**

**Listen to this: The Church Council is giving them away for FREE!**

**You heard right! Church Council is giving away tickets for FREE!**

All of the proceeds from the Concert will benefit our Early Bird Giving!

## THE WOMEN OF ZION

*Suffering and Endurance* will be the focus of Session 7 of Transforming Life and Faith. Romans 5:1-5 sets the tone: “Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have access to God’s grace.” Paul writes that “we boast in our hope of sharing in God’s glory; and not only that, we boast in our sufferings, too, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint.” This hope does not disappoint because it is grounded in God’s promise, sealed with Christ’s love,

Dr. Carol Schersten LaHurd writes, “This month’s topic may be the most complicated and difficult of this 9-session Bible study.” Suffering does not lend itself to easy answers. There is no substitute for having friends who will join us in our struggle, listening intently, and quietly praying for courage and boldness as we expect big things from the Lord of love, “our fellow sufferer who understands.”

We will look closely at some passages from the Book of Job, especially Job 38 and 42, where we see that wisdom requires humility, but mostly a God who loves us with a love that will never let us go. There are also some great passages from Romans (5:1-5 and 8:31-39) that will help as we seek to find ground beneath our feet that feels like God’s grace.

You are invited to join us as we talk about God’s will for us in suffering. We’ll meet in the Resource Center on Tuesday, March 17, at 9:30 a.m. Hey, that’s St. Patrick’s Day! *May the road rise up to meet you. May the wind be always at your back. May the sun shine warm upon your face, the rains fall soft upon your fields, and until we meet again, may God hold you in the palm of His hand.”*

## MORE WOMEN’S NEWS

*Zion’s Comfort Givers* meet on the second and fourth Thursdays of the month, which in March, weather willing, will be the 12<sup>th</sup> and the 26<sup>th</sup>. It’s been hard getting back to our regular schedule. Perhaps March will treat us better. The old saying still applies, “Many hands make light work.” Consider joining us as we enjoy coffee, conversation, and the feeling of knowing that we are helping others in need through the good that we do. We meet in Luther Hall, beginning at 9:30 a.m.

*Zion’s Chancel Guild* met for their Chancel Guild dinner on Monday, February 9<sup>th</sup>. The social half-hour began at 5:30 p.m., with Chuck Danner providing the entertainment by playing some *oldies but goodies*, with the focus on love songs, since it was close to Valentine’s Day. He forewarned us that we needed to pay attention, since a quiz would follow, which it did, after dinner! During dinner Kay Davis, Jane Fairman, and Darlene Milavickas served as our hosts. We enjoyed chicken, pasta, red skin potatoes, California blend vegetables, rolls, butter, with apple dumplings for dessert – and everything was absolutely delicious! We enjoyed great attendance, and we thank members of the Chancel Guild for their faithful service.

The *Chancel Guild* will meet in March for their traditional “Get Ready for Holy Week” Cleaning Day on the evening of Monday, March 23<sup>rd</sup>, at 6:30 p.m. Cleaners will focus on liturgical items and communion ware. A meeting will follow in Luther Hall. Everyone is now on notice that Holy Week and Easter are in view. We appreciate everything that the wonderful women of our Chancel Guild tend to as they prepare our Sanctuary for worship on all of the special occasions that are scheduled during this high holy season.

## MEN OF ZION NEWS

**Lutheran Men in Mission** host a Pancake Breakfast at St. John's Lutheran Church in Canal Fulton on Saturday, **March 21<sup>st</sup>**, 8 a.m. to 10 a.m. All proceeds will be given to St. John's SALT Box ministry. **SALT** stands for **S**erving **A**nd **L**oving **T**ogether. It is an outreach ministry at St. John's where twice a month hot meals are provided to anyone who comes through their doors. The only question asked is, "Would you like anymore?"

**The Men of Zion** will host the Lenten dinner on Sunday, March 22<sup>nd</sup>. That's the Sunday when we will begin with a Steel Drum Band Concert at 4:30 p.m., and then provide a light (but delicious) dinner for everyone who can join us. This should be a great evening, and the Men of Zion will be ready; but we will need your help. Let's join together and make this an evening none will soon forget!

**Pastor Clyde McGee** tells the story of a convent in Ireland, where their frail Mother Superior lay dying. The nuns gathered around her bed to make her last journey comfortable. They tried giving her warm milk to drink, but she refused it. One of the nuns took the glass back to the kitchen. Then, remembering a bottle of Irish Whiskey that had been received as a gift the previous Christmas, she opened it and poured a generous amount into the warm milk. Back at Mother Superior's bed, they held the glass to her lips. The frail nun drank a little, then a little more and before they knew it, she had finished the whole glass down to the last drop. As her eyes brightened, the nuns thought it would be a good opportunity to have one last talk with their spiritual leader. "Mother," the nuns asked earnestly, "please give us some of your wisdom before you leave us." She raised herself up in bed on one elbow, looked at them and said, "Don't sell that cow!"

## REMEMBERING WITH JOY

*To my church family and friends,*

Thank you to Pastor Sherwindt for his visit to me at Akron City Hospital, and thanks also to everyone for your prayers and concerns during my recent run in with medical issues. I feel like I am now on the road to recovery. Thanks be to God!

*My thanks to all of you,  
Richard Zumkehr*

## MARCH SENIOR BIRTHDAYS

## ANNIVERSARIES IN MARCH

On Sunday, March 17, the world remembers St. Patrick of Ireland with food and drink, songs and parades. The faithful everywhere remember this gifted saint; and we remember him with his words of prayer:

*"I arise today with God's strength to steer me, God's might to uphold me, God's wisdom to guide me, God's hand to guard me, God's shield to protect me..."*

*"I arise today with Christ as my shield: Christ with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me, Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me, Christ in the hearts of all who think of me, Christ in the mouth of all who speak of me."*

IN LOVING MEMORY OF ELLIS R. LE BEAU

(March 23, 1924 – February 21, 2015)

What a life! What a man! What a love that filled his life and that of his family with every good gift imaginable! I don't know where to begin. All I know is that when I started to tell Zion's bicentennial story with the June 2013 edition of *The Zion Herald*, I began with the name Ellis Le Beau, the man who had the distinction of being our oldest lifelong member. There are lots of familiar Zion names woven into the narrative of Ellis Le Beau and his family tree. There are stories of shuffle board tiles and laying the floors in what is now Luther Hall; but most of all, we remember how Ellis and Anna Mae were always active among Zion's leaders, and deeply faithful as long-term members of a church they loved.

Ellis' specialty may have been laying floors, but, in truth, he was always available to help in our efforts to keep costs down by joining with others and doing the work of caring for our property ourselves. That's still our trademark, which has helped us maintain a healthy bottom line. Ellis was a big part of our story at Zion; and we were a big part of his. Ellis was a simple man, with simple needs, and simple loves. All in all, he was simply blessed in every way, and he knew it. He thanked God for it every day. That is the simple truth about Ellis Le Beau. He honored his country by responding to duty's call during World War II. He was loyal to his friends as a matter of principle and fact. He was faithful to the Lord and to our church his whole life long. He loved his family, and was loved by his family, more than words could ever express.

That love couldn't have been better described than with the words Paul penned with his great hymn of praise to love found in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians 13: "If I speak with the eloquence of men and of angels, and do not have love, I am nothing but a noisy gong and a clanging cymbal. If I have prophetic powers and understand all mysteries, and have faith that can move mountains, but don't know God's love, and don't have it in my heart, I know nothing and I am nothing. I could give away everything I have, and offer my body to be burned; but if I don't have God's love in my heart and in my life, I gain nothing. This love is patient and kind, not envious or boastful. It is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way, is not irritable or resentful. It does not rejoice when one or the other is wrong, but when all are right together..." Wasn't this the love that Ellis modeled? Wasn't this the love that Ellis shared with Anna Mae, and with all of us?

We have been blessed to know this man whose life we celebrate, for the love he shared and the hope that sustained him, his strong sense of the hope that there's more yet to come. This hope for more to come goes to the heart of what has been important to Ellis his whole life, but especially lately, as he has lived each day longing for that promised reunion with the love of his life, Anna Mae. This heavenly reunion is certainly a heart-warming hope, but it is more than that. It is our Lord's promise. We believe that there is more to come, much more. This is our hope because it is God's promise. Jesus came to give us this life that never ends. It's right there in John: "I came that you might have life, and have it in abundance!" (John 10:10) He is the way to true life, to God's life, to life everlasting. The Word of God says it. The people of God believe it. And that's the way it is ... for Ellis, for Anna Mae, and for all of us who as children of God have been embraced by God's grace and blessed to know this love God freely gives, because this love that has been ours throughout our lives, and will be ours through all eternity ... in Jesus' name. Amen