

GREETINGS FROM THE PASTOR:

Christ is risen. Alleluia! Holy Week is past. May God be praised! The narrative that began with Palm Sunday's focus on our Lord's passion and death is the revelation of God's love and the gift of God's life. This is the story of salvation! There are so many ways to say it; but this is the message of the gospel, the good news of God's grace extended freely to all, that all might share in the love God gives and the life that can be ours as we let Christ in, transforming us from the inside out, beginning with our knowledge that God is with us, and leading us to become the instruments through which God's love is made real in and for the world. Could the message of God's love be any simpler, and the ministry of the gospel any clearer? Eight days following the miracle of Resurrection, Jesus comes to the disciples in the Upper Room, breathing the new life of peace, "Peace be with you. As the Father sent me, so I send you." (John 20:19-21)

This encounter in John is often called *the little Pentecost*, in contrast to the well-known text in Acts 2, where readers on the Festival of Pentecost are forced to pronounce the names of exotic tribes in the Middle East and nations from around the world; and congregations made up of reserved Lutherans are forced to contemplate the Holy Spirit making its presence known through the force of *a mighty wind*, empowering believers to speak convincingly of their faith in whatever language it is that their neighbors understand. In contrast to this BIG PENTECOST, the little Pentecost in John is more subtle, but no less spectacular, inviting those who are filled with the Holy Spirit to sense the peace of God within, and then to share this peace with others. That seems very doable; and what is more, the Apostle Paul knew that this little Pentecost was central to the life of the church.

In 2nd Corinthians, while speaking of the miracle of life in Christian community, Paul writes that "if anyone is living in Christ, there is new creation." (2nd Corinthians 5:17) There in that place where believers in Christ are gathered is new life; and the purpose of this new life is to live and share God's peace through the ministry of reconciliation. The passage above continues, "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation. In other words, God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.... So we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal to the world through us." (2nd Corinthians 5:18-20) Why are peace and reconciliation important? Restoring peace through the ministry of reconciliation was the point and purpose of our Lord's mission; and it is the point and purpose of our mission and ministry, too.

The words of one of our favorite songs in the blue book express this thought best: "We all are one in mission. We all are one in call; our varied gifts united by Christ, the Lord of all. A single great commission compels us from above to plan and work together that all might know Christ's love. We all are called to service, to witness in Christ's name. Our ministries are different, our purpose is the same: to touch the lives of others with God's surprising grace, so every folk and nation may feel God's warm embrace. Now let us be united, and let our song be heard. Now let us be a vessel for God's redeeming Word. We all are one in mission. We all are one in call; our varied gifts united by Christ, the Lord of all." Amen (*With One Voice*, #755)

CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

President Mark Votaw called our March meeting to order at 7:04 p.m. Janet Slease, Learning Ministry Elder, offered devotions, along with matching Randy Cizek's box of chocolates from the theme of Valentine's Day in February, with green bags of goodies for St. Patrick's Day in March. I can't quite recall the substance of our devotional beginning, but the cookies afterwards were scrumptious! Our business focused on the challenges posed by Lent and Holy Week; but we also spent a good deal of time thinking ahead to completing some projects related to the celebration of our bicentennial anniversary. We adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

We finalized the details about membership activity in 2015. We remembered with love the loss of four members called to their heavenly home (Earl Bathol, Ellis Le Beau, Blair Woodside, Jr., and Rosalie Babich), while registering a net gain of 3 baptized members (from 487 to 490), and a net gain of 2 confirmed members (from 416 to 418). Looking ahead toward Pentecost, we will welcome eight baptized members into the ranks of the confirmed with the Rite of Confirmation: Justin Dague, Cassie Frank, Jeremy Fox, Chrissy Nicholson, Emma Parkomaki, Jacob Parkomaki, Marcus Rhodes, and Casey Walters.

The Treasurer's Report for February provided yet another reminder of the fact that we can keep our budget balanced when we set our hearts and mind to it. Continued support through Early Bird Giving kept us in the black during a month where the costs of winter remained wonderfully mild. We continue to pray for favorable weather, and trust that your strong support will continue as we celebrate Holy Week and Easter.

PROPERTY PROJECTS NEWS

The property projects on the front burner of Council's March meeting involved money that would be spent from the Bicentennial Fund and Undesignated Memorials & Gifts. We approved upgrading our sound system at a Special Congregational Meeting last November. Some minor repairs were specified, but mostly, we needed to improve the wireless aspects of our sound system so that we could comply with some changes over the years in FCC regulations. We anticipate work being completed by Easter.

We also turned our attention to the kitchen, with some needed changes long overdue. We need to replace the kitchen door that opens to the parking lot; and we need to replace our older two-compartment sink with an up-to-date three-compartment sink, which will require some adjustments to the cabinets. We will also install a small hot water heater in the kitchen to improve our access to hot water in the kitchen. These improvements will require some additional adjustments here and there; but funds are already available and have been designated for this in the Bicentennial Projects Fund.

One additional project has been added to the celebration of our bicentennial, namely, the extension of the carpet installed in the Main Hallway, Narthex, and Church Office (in 2010) to Luther Hall. The carpet in Luther Hall has served us well; but it's old, stained, and worn. The newer carpet is still produced, and is available for a great price from North Canton's Heritage Carpet & Flooring. It has worn well, is a great color, has generated no complaints, and cries out for an opportunity to complete the job we began six years ago. Plus, members have already shown support, both with their voices and their donations.

FINANCIAL FACTS & NEWS

Zion is in good financial shape. We have no debts, substantial physical property, and healthy reserves. Our continual vigilance when it comes to balancing budgets allows us to preserve the strengths that healthy reserves promise and provide. While we are using some “legacy gifts” to cover the expenses of upgrades to our sound system and needed repairs to the parsonage, other projects, like targeted repairs to the kitchen and the replacement of old carpet with new (in Luther Hall), are tapping funds that have benefited from new (and recent) giving.

So, in following the Treasurer’s Report provided below, you will see that we have enjoyed surpluses for the month and for the year-to-date. We have healthy balances in the Youth Fund and the Food Pantry Fund. Advanced Giving refers to offerings given in one lump sum that are intended to be used throughout the year. The Accumulated Surplus refers to small annual surpluses that over the years have added to over \$14,000! Plus, there is close to \$13,000 available for use in completing Bicentennial Projects.

ZION'S FINANCIAL FACTS: FEBRUARY	
Income for February	16,999.50
Expenses in February	<u>16,890.91</u>
February’s Surplus	108.59
Year-to-Date Income	39,642.39
Year-to-Date Expenses	<u>39,398.84</u>
Year-to-Date Surplus	243.55
The Youth of Zion Fund	8,184.46
Advance Giving for 2016	10,000.00
The Bicentennial Fund	12,936.31
The Food Pantry Fund	8,005.87
The Accumulated Surplus	14,008.27
WE THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!	

MORE COUNCIL NEWS

Resource Ministry, Jim Fidler: In addition to taking a special interest in working with the Finance Ministry, the Audit Ministry, and all things related to Zion’s financial resources, Jim has a background that enjoys the particulars of knowing the rules by which organizations operate. He listened with interest as Pastor Karl Biermann talked about the call process, which he thought was very informative and helpful. To sum up, we cannot form a call committee until August 1, which is when Pastor Sherwindt’s call as Zion’s Pastor ends, per agreement regarding his retirement. This sequence is set by our Constitution (13.05)

Bishop Allende will meet with our Church Council (on May 17th) to begin the process of responding to what we think our interim ministry needs will be. We hope to have an Interim Pastor in place by the time we celebrate our *End-of-the-Summer Party* on the Sunday of Labor Day weekend; but only time will tell. *Ora et labora*: pray often and work hard. Bishop Allende and the Synod staff play a pivotal role in helping with this.

Once the Call Ministry is in place, which could be as soon as August 1, Pastor Biermann will furnish demographic information about the Congregation, along with other pertinent information that will contribute to a process of self-study for Zion. All of this will lead to a list of potential candidates available for call. The call process is a careful, deliberative process that usually takes at least nine months to a year. It is important to get it right the first time, since, for obvious reasons, once a call is extended, accepted, and a new pastor installed, everyone hopes that we won’t be revisiting the process for a good, long while.

LENTEN FOOD REVIEW

Our Lenten dinners, as promised, were light, delicious, and truly exceptional. On Valentine's Day, it was pulled pork sandwiches, with a full complement of soups, chilis, sides, salads, and desserts. On February 21st, Zion's Chancel Guild topped what we enjoyed the week before; and there was no drop off in our dining delight when the Youth of Zion (their families, and our youth leaders) served as hosts February 28th.

With the arrival of March, we switched from Sunday evening sermons offered by Pastor Sherwindt in February to a call process presentation offered by Pastor Karl Biermann on March 6th, and our traditional reading of the Passion Narrative by Zion's youth on March 13th. Not surprisingly, the quality of our light but delicious Lenten dinners only increased! We expected a larger crowd for March 6th, and we asked the entire congregation to serve as hosts. We had a large crowd, and great food, again with soups, sandwiches, and *desserts by Tony*, delicious desserts, to be sure, and invitingly displayed by Tony Niesz.

It's always nice when Tony has the time to prepare his trademark desserts for these dinners; and he was back the following week with the Men of Zion, the group hosting our fifth Lenten dinner. We enjoyed our largest crowd, and what may have been our best food, Reuben sandwiches to celebrate St. Patrick's Day, with more great soups, wonderful chilis, delicious sides, and a table filled with unbelievable desserts.

Attendance for our five Sunday evening Lenten services came in at an average of 65, due, in part, to the services we offered, the food we enjoyed, and the mutual support that made all the difference in the world!

OUR LENTEN SERVICES

February brought a series of two-a-days on Sunday, a sermon in the morning and another sermon in the evening. These sermons focused on our being called by God to serve. We looked at God's call to Jesus in Luke, God's call to Paul on the road to Damascus, and Martin Luther's sense of call. With the arrival of March, Pr. Karl Biermann talked about the call process, and the Synod's role as our partner in this process. On the Fifth Sunday in Lent, we returned to our tradition of having our youth lead us through Luke's passion narrative. All five evening services were nicely attended; and all added to our appreciation of God's presence leading the way forward.

Our three evening services in February featured our old friend and former organist, Margaret Reichenbach, leading worship from the organ. Our two evening services in March featured an old friend of the Pastor's, the long-time organist at what had been St. John / St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Akron, Sarah Kaufman, on organ. Needless to say, we couldn't have been more delighted with all the persons who made our services truly enjoyable. The *Service of Light* in Evening Prayer paints a nice picture of the lengthening of the light during the Lenten season.

Each of our services taught us something important about God's call. We are called to strive for justice and work for peace, following the example of our Lord Jesus. We are called to become the kind of community that changed Paul's life, and changes lives still by being the new creation that proclaims and embodies the new life that is ours in Christ. Finally, we are called to trust that God's will can be discerned and extended through the call process.

GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL



Happy Birthday to:

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Sunday, April 3rd: It's time to return to our regular schedule for all Sunday School Classes
Sunday, May 1st: FEED THE NEED, The Stark County Hunger Walk, beginning at 3:00 p.m.
Thursday, May 12: Confirmands and families meet at Carrabba's for Confirmation Dinner
Sunday, May 15: The Festival of Pentecost, the Birthday of the Church as the Body of Christ
Sunday, May 22: The Festival of Holy Trinity means a Sunday School Party for Everyone
The Week of July 11–15: Vacation Bible School at Zion Lutheran Church, 9 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

SUNDAY SCHOOL: PRE-K THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL:

We will return to our normal Sunday School schedule for the month of April. All classes will meet each Sunday from 9:15 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. for lessons and fun. The High School class will be working on our service projects, which include collecting and assembling items for Refuge of Hope, and preparing to collect commitments for the Hunger Walk on May 1st.

THE EASTER PLAY: PRAYER, AN ACT OF LOVE

This year's Easter Program was not a traditional Easter Pageant. Instead, it was fun and light-hearted, sharing a very important message. During the program we saw a family of cousins hanging out at Grandma & Grandpa's house on Easter. The older cousins complained of how lame it was there because there was no TV or Netflix, and the younger cousins were upset because there were no toys, only puzzles, which they had done over and over.



After discussing the scripture passages they had heard from chapters 22 and 23 in the Gospel of Luke, the cousins realize that their grandparents love them so much because they are always praying for them, just as Jesus is always praying for others because of his immense love for God's world. He prayed for others even during the dark time surrounding his crucifixion. Our program helped everyone to see that prayer really is an act of love, and the persons who pray for us make it clear that we truly are blessed by the ties that bind our hearts in Christian love.

A big *thank you* goes out to everyone who helped with our Easter program! Thanks to the Sunday School leaders, Janet Slease, Connie Riffle and Renee Keith for all their help during Sunday School, during our Saturday rehearsal, and the morning of the program on Sunday. *Thank you* to Suzanne Walters for all of her support with the music, and to Brian Walters for his help with the sound system. Last but not least, *thank you* to all of the kids for their hard work and all their time. They did an amazing job as always!

MORE GREAT NEWS FOR ZION'S YOUTH

THANK YOU! THANK YOU! THANK YOU TO ALL!

There are many THANK YOUS to share that go along with Lent and Easter. We are so grateful to everyone for their time and support of all of our activities during this busy season in the church. First, thank you again to the youth and their families for hosting one of the Lenten dinners. It was a great night of fellowship with delicious soups, sloppy joes and desserts. Second, thank you to the youth that participated in reading the passion narrative during our last Lenten service in March. They all did such a great job and we appreciate their willingness to help.

Next, thank you to everyone who donated candy to help us fill the Easter Eggs for this year's Easter Egg Hunt. We truly appreciate your support and generosity. We would also like to thank the High School and Confirmation classes for filling over five hundred eggs for the Easter Egg Hunt on Easter morning during Sunday School. A big thank you to our High Schoolers and Confirmants for helping to hide all of the eggs.



Finally, thank you to all the kids that participated in our Easter Egg Hunt! With over five hundred eggs, the "hunters" were able to find many, many eggs filled with candy and surprises. We were able to hide the eggs inside and outside for a morning of great fun. We finished Easter morning with donuts, juice, milk, and a lesson on Christ's Resurrection! He is Risen! He Is Risen, Indeed! Alleluia!

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL: JULY 11 – 15

We are making progress in finalizing details for VBS this year. We are still working on the theme and hope to make that decision by the end of this month so we can start moving forward with music, decorations, crafts, and lessons. This year VBS will again be from 9:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., Monday through Thursday, and 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Friday. The format will be very similar to last year. We will need many volunteers for VBS, from preparations, to help with teaching, assisting with crafts, leading outdoor games, and helping to organize service projects during VBS week. If you are interested in helping out, please let Debbie Fox know at 330-966-2433 or dfox521@sbcglobal.net.

THE 2016 STARK COUNTY HUNGER WALK

FEED THE NEED
Stark County Hunger Walk
May 1st, 2016

The need is critical. Hunger affects 1 in 7 people in our communities. 1 out of 4 area children lack regular access to food. We can make a difference. 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 persons in need. Every penny raised by this walk goes to the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank. The date is Sunday, May 1st, with registration at 2:00 p.m. The walk begins at 3:00 p.m. at Community Christian Church. It's kids-friendly and pet-friendly. Mark your calendars and plan to help!

THE WOMEN OF ZION

Keep on Keepin' on will be our theme as we head into Session 4, **Christian Citizenship 101**. Our theme verse is a good one: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say, rejoice! (Philippians 4:4) In this closing session, we return to the beginning, celebrating the joy that comes with knowing Jesus and serving others. This passage encourages us to keep our focus on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and gracious. As we remain fixed on considering everything that is both excellent and worthy of praise, not only will we not become nattering nabobs of negativity, we will actually be blessed with the peace of God, which surpasses all human understanding! Wow! You mean that we will learn all this by joining in the conversation of the women's monthly Bible study? Yes, all this ... and more! God's Word gives life. With the Word of God spoken in Genesis, creation comes into being; and with the Word of God incarnate, new life is ours in Christ. Be sure to join us on April 19th. We meet at 9:30 a.m. in the Resource Center. All women are invited. All of us enjoy this time of conversation and fellowship; and we know that you will enjoy it, too.

Zion's Comfort Givers meet on the second and fourth Thursdays, April 8th and 22nd. It's true; many hands make work light. Consider joining us as we enjoy coffee, conversation, and the feeling of knowing that we're helping others through the good we do. We meet in Luther Hall at 9:30 a.m.

We offer our thanks to the Women of Zion, and to Zion's Chancel Guild as we think of the many ways in which their devotion and service contributed to the beauty and comfort of our worship at Zion during Holy Week and the Lenten season. We've been richly blessed.

WOMEN'S SPRING CLUSTER

Canton-Massillon Cluster Spring Gathering is set for St. John Lutheran Church, 366 West Market Street, Canal Fulton, on **Saturday, April 16th**. Registration begins with coffee at 9:00 a.m. The Bible study leader will be Deb Metzger, an Associate in Ministry (AIM), working as the Spiritual Director at OASIS, an urban ministry in Akron. Our Bible text will be 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, which reminds us that growing disciples involves many active Christians planting, watering, and in many ways cultivating the seeds of faith. Janet Kurtz, a Master Gardener, will speak about what goes into being good soil. A light lunch will be provided by the women of St. John's. Our offering will be split between OASIS, St. John's S.A.L.T. Box ministry, and the NEOSWO. An in-kind gathering of baby quilts for local hospitals and lap robes for the residents of St. Luke's is invited. Please contact Betty Tracy with your interest.

Dancing with God, A Spiritual Gathering for Christian Women: this is the theme for the Region 6 Spring Gathering of Women in the ELCA, from Friday morning to Saturday afternoon, June 17—18. It all takes place at the Holiday Inn French Quarter in Perrysburg, Ohio. "I will build you up again, and you will be rebuilt, O Israel. You will take up your tambourines, and go out and dance with joy!" (Jeremiah 31:4) Pastor Christine Johnson will lead our Bible study; and Mary Satterfield will join in on tambourine! For registration information, contact Judy Sampson (419-238-9779); and for more information, contact Sharon Moenter at skmoenter@gmail.com.

We extend a **SPECIAL THANK YOU** to Betty Tracy, who, as the leader of the Chancel Guild, puts in many, many hours at church making sure that we're ready for worship.

SYNOD NEWS AND ZION

The 2016 Northeastern Ohio Synod Assembly will take place in Akron at the John S. Knight Convention Center on the Friday and Saturday of May 13—14. Our theme is *We Are Church for the Sake of the World*. This two-day format begins with the Eucharist at 8:40 a.m. on Friday, and concludes with a brief installation service at Noon on Saturday, which is followed by the Eucharist. While workshops will be planned to provide interesting learning opportunities, these shorter formats focus mostly on the business of running our Synod. We will receive reports from all the major committees, and from leaders representing the ELCA.

SUNDAY NIGHT LIVE (in the afternoon) in the Canton-Massillon Conference! It's a youth event for all Middle School and High School age youth. This event will take place at Zion Lutheran Church on Raff Road, the Sunday afternoon of April 10th, from Noon 'til 3:00 p.m. Youth groups from Lutheran churches in Canton, Massillon, and everywhere in between will be there for food, fun, music, games, making blankets, and worship. Julie Hufstetler and her band will provide the program. The tying of fleece blankets will be our service project, and will go to Stark Social Workers Network, Refuge of Hope, and local hospice centers. Come and have fun with Lutheran youth from all over the area!

(Speaking of *Refuge of Hope*, we're still trying to assemble snack bags for the Refuge of Hope. Before too long, we'll be collecting 16-ounce bottled waters, granola bars, small boxed raisins, small packets of Craisins, and small Slim Jim beef sticks. Our youth will assemble these items in snack bags, which are given to those who attend the dinners sponsored by the Refuge of Hope.)

AN UPCOMING INTERIM

In the normal course of a congregation's life, a pastor will accept another call; and in a month or so, the pastor is gone and the call process begins. When pastors retire there is usually more time to prepare for the transition. At Zion, three of our last five pastors have retired after rather long tenures. Pastor Ruth retired in 1968 after serving at Zion from 1957. Pastor Meuschke retired in 1984 after serving from 1968. Now Pastor Sherwindt is retiring after serving at Zion since 2002. Retirements allow everyone the luxury to prepare for the transition in a more deliberative fashion.

Way back in October this year's budget was passed with this transition in view. More recently, Pastor Karl Biermann was present with us on the evening of March 6th to look forward to the ways in which the Synod staff will be available to work with us as partners as we make our way through the process. While the call process is new to us, the Synod staff brings extensive experience and lots of resources that have proven helpful for churches moving through the process.

During the first couple of Sundays in April, Mark Votaw will make himself available between the worship services as we begin to formulate the particulars of what we would like to see in an Interim Pastor. In addition to preaching and presiding at worship on Sundays, how much presence do we need during the week? What kind of involvement in our program life do we desire? While it is Council's responsibility to work with our Bishop in arranging for a suitable interim ministry, we simply want to touch base with the people of Zion in our desire to do the best we can. So plan to join us on the Sunday mornings of April 3rd and April 10th, as we move through this process together.

MEN OF ZION NEWS

We've already mentioned the great food and desserts we served as a part of our Sunday Evening Lenten Dinner on March 13th; but many of Zion's men were found in the kitchen at our other Lenten dinners, too, preparing soups, chilis, sides, sandwiches, and desserts. Thank you, Men of Zion, for your great support and delicious food!

Speaking of delicious food, this is the month when we look ahead to the next edition of our Mother's Day Breakfast. The trouble in looking ahead this year is that we are also looking ahead to the need to finish some improvements in our kitchen, which, in all likelihood, will overlap with the Sunday of Mother's Day. So, for the time being, we are going to have to put the Mother's Day Breakfast on hold. We need to make sure that we get started on the kitchen, and that we finish carpeting Luther Hall, preferably before we celebrate Confirmation on May 15th!

FOOD PANTRY NEWS

In preparing for our Easter distribution in March, we decided to forego the idea of Easter hams because some turkeys came late to our Christmas party, and we decided to distribute them instead! It was turkeys around for all of the families we serve through the ministry of our food pantry, as we continue to excel at being the best pantry in town. In fact, we actually have a long-established reputation for making sure that we distribute a healthy diet of food that covers the major nutrition groups, with a special focus on making sure that meat is always part of the food we share.

We are deeply grateful to all of our friends and members who make it a point to join us on the first and third Tuesdays of every month, when the work of trying to help others goes on – rain or shine, snow or whatever! In fact, we were surprised by snow a couple of times lately; and, while schools were closed and roads were, at times, impassible, our doors were open for the families who needed our help. It's been a relatively mild winter; but some of our Food Pantry Tuesdays have seen the worst of our winter weather. Again, we are thankful for all of our volunteers.

Dear friends at Zion Lutheran Church,

Thank you, Pastor Sherwindt and fellow members at Zion, for your prayers during Sue's surprising and brief illness, and for your many cards and expressions of concern.

Our entire family remains deeply grateful for everyone who pulled together to create a warm and delicious setting for the funeral luncheon we enjoyed. It was a lot of work, and you really made us feel like family.

*Very sincerely yours,
Carl and Fred Geib*