**ZION’S MESSENGER**

**January 2021 + Zion Lutheran Church + 269-367-4817**

**Pastor Becky Emergency Phone: 616-265-2862**

**Email Address:** **pastorbecky@zionwoodland.org**

A continued Merry Christmas as we remain in the days after Christmas until Epiphany, on January 6 and Happy New Year!

First, I would like to thank you for the gift of the beautiful Christmas stole that was given to me by the council at our December meeting and the very generous gift on Christmas Eve! Terry and I wish to thank you for all of your Christmas cards, gifts, and greetings during this season.

Many pastors whom I know, have the practice of giving out star words on Epiphany, words to give encouragement for the new year. We certainly need words of encouragement as we go into this new year. I would never had imagined the year that we had in 2020 when I wrote my first newsletter article last year.

So, my star word for you as we enter this new year is HOPE. We have a lot to hope for this year. The vaccines are rolling out and many of us are hopeful that as enough of us get the vaccine, the coronavirus will no longer plague our lives. We can be hopeful that we will be able to return to worship in our sanctuary at some point into the new year. A reminder that the council voted at the December meeting that the positivity rates in Barry and Ionia county will need to hold steady at 3 % for 10 days before that happens, but it will happen! It may take awhile before we can be rid of the restrictions for safety but we can be hopeful that one day, as we gather, we will be able to sing again, fellowship again and eat together again. We can be hopeful that Sunday

School and youth programs may return by fall. I look forward with hope and joy to see many of you in person as we have missed seeing so many this past year. I hope that we may also see some new faces, as our abilities to do our services on FB live and now live streaming and you tube have reached people beyond our church community. It would be wonderful if some of those people who are local, might decide to join our fellowship.

Let us be assured that no matter what this new year holds for us, as a congregation, and as individuals and families, that God will be with us. The message of Christmas is for all time, God sent Emmanuel- God with us- into our world and Emmanuel will remain with us in every day that lies ahead.

Even with colder weather upon us, we have had a good attendance when we returned to the parking lot in November. Until we can safely return to the sanctuary, we will continue to broadcast in the parking lot at AM 1620 as long as we don’t have winter storms on Sundays. We will follow normal storm protocol if the weather is determined to be unsafe for people to travel. We will also continue to offer the service live streamed via our Face Book pages and You Tube. I thank Paul Meade for getting all of the technology in place for this and to him and Martha for faithfully be present each Sunday. If the weather is ever too bad for them to make it to church, I will still give the sermon on FB live from home.

We have many ways to reach out and worship as we start this year! Be blessed with the gift of hope as we enter 2021!

Pastor Becky +

**COUNCIL REPORT**

The December Council meeting was held via Zoom. Pastor started the meeting with an Advent Devotion and prayer. The Council presented a beautiful new Christmas Stole to the Pastor on behalf of the congregation as a thank you for all that Pastor has done this year to continue worship and minister to the congregation during the pandemic.

Pastor shared the recommendation of Worship Planning that in person worship in the sanctuary resume when the positivity rate for Barry and Ionia counties reaches and remains at 3%. Council approved the 3% positivity rate and indicated that it should be part of downward trend that is sustained for at least 10 days. If this milestone is reached on or before Wednesday, then worship would resume in the sanctuary the following Sunday. If it is reached after Wednesday, worship will resume the next week on Sunday. This is the same level that Grace Lutheran in Hastings has adopted for returning to the sanctuary.

Karen reported that she was able to obtain tax exempt status from Consumer’s Energy for the church. This resulted in a $952 credit applied to the church Consumer’s account.

Winter snow removal for the church and parsonage will again be done by Roger Geiger.

The Longest Night (Blue Christmas) service will be via Facebook Live only this year. There will be no parking lot service available. The Christmas Eve service was discussed and a time of 6:00 pm was agreed upon for a drive-in service. Pastor asked that someone broadcast the service via Facebook Live using their phone. Efforts will be made to make luminaries. A pre-lit Christmas tree will be set up.

The annual meeting needs to be held as there are a number of items that require congregational approval. Council discussed mailing and/or emailing the annual meeting packets to members prior to the meeting. Ballots could then be mailed back. There was also discussion of holding the meeting using a combination of Zoom, a drive-up meeting following worship on January 17th and/or providing a time when people can drive up and drop off ballots. There will be a note added to the announcements that updates to addresses are needed for mailing the annual meeting packet.

Continuation of drive-in service during the winter months was discussed. It was felt that as the weather gets colder and wintery weather sets in, there may be fewer people who wish to come to the drive-in service. Council agreed to continue to broadcast the service to the parking lot for anyone who wishes to come.

A part has been ordered for the washing machine at the parsonage and we will find someone to install the part. This was a much more economical way to fix the machine.

Thank you notes were shared from the Lake Odessa Downtown Development Authority for sponsoring a garland and from Lilly Pepper-Griffin regarding confirmation.

**ADDRESS CHANGES NEEDED**

If you have changed your address during the past year, please call or email the church office with updated information by Wed, Jan 6.. This will be used for church mailings including annual meeting materials. The email address for the church is zionwoodlandmi@gmail.com.

**NOMINATIONS FOR \**

**BOARDS AND COMMITTEES**

The Nominations committee is finishing its work to create the slate for election at the January 2021 Annual Meeting. Thank you to those who have been contacted and are willing to continue serving on boards and committees. Your faithfulness in continuing our work in the church and community is appreciated. If you are not currently serving on a board or committee and would like to, please reach out to a member of the nominations committee. Our nominations committee is Jerry Engle, Deb Elenbaas, Mary Makley, and Martha Yoder serving as Council Representative.

**CHANGE IN MAILING ADDRESS**

**FOR THE CHURCH**

The mailbox at the church has been removed and the church is now receiving mail from a post office box. If you mail offerings and other information, you will need to use the new address. Please note this address change in your church directory:

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

P.O. Box 14

Woodland, MI 48897

**OFFERING COUNTERS**

We are looking for one more volunteer to take turns counting offerings so we can have one more team. If we can find one more volunteer, we will have four teams of two serving as counters which means each team would count about once a month. If you are willing to consider serving in this role, please contact Martha Yoder.

**CALLING ALL KNITTERS!**

**REPLENISH OUR**

**PRAYER SHAWL MNIISTRY**

If you are a knitter, we need you! As the cold weather sets in and you have more time inside, consider knitting prayer shawls to replenish our supply. During the past year, three prayer shawls were distributed. We would like to replace these and add to the shawls that are available for distribution. If you need a pattern or assistance with materials to knit a shawl, please contact Martha Yoder. Thank you!

**LAY PREACHERS NEEDED FOR 2021**

As we did last year, some of Pastor Becky’s off Sundays will be led by supply pastors and some by our own lay leaders.

Here are dates where lay leaders are needed as we start the new year. There will still be unknowns as to how we will be worshipping early in the new year but best to have people on board!

February 21

April 18

Please let Pastor Becky know of your availability for these dates! Thank you! Our lay preachers are appreciated very much!

**MEN’S WEDNESDAY COFFEE**

The men’s Wednesday coffee is canceled until further notice due to the rise in Covid 19 cases.

**THANK YOU!!**

Dear Zion Family,

 Thank you for the beautiful cross and corsage. I always appreciate all of your prayers and am so blessed to be a part of Zion. Thank you for sharing in a memorable service for me.

 Lilly Pepper-Griffin

**SUNDAYS IN JANUARY**

**(All Schedules subject to change as we monitor the Covid-19 situation.)**

**January 3- Drive-In Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Claude Smith

Offering Counters: Mary Makley, Martha Yoder

**January 10- Drive in Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Paul Meade

Trustee: Tom Krikke

Offering Counters: Jerry Engle, Brenda Bite

**January 17- Annual Meeting, Drive In, Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Jolene Griffin

Trustee: Jerry Engle

Offering Counters: Doug Mackenzie, Mike Johnson

**January 24- Drive in, No Communion**

Presider: Jolene Griffin

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Claude Smith

Offering Counters: Mary Makley, Martha Yoder

**January 31- Drive in Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Paul Meade

Trustee: Tom Krikke

Offering Counters: Jerry Engle, Brenda Bite