**ZION’S MESSENGER**

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

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

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

 A year ago, when I wrote this newsletter, we were full of all kinds of enthusiasm as we looked forward to 2020. We had some wonderful dinners put on by our youth for fundraisers as they looked forward to things like the Great Lakes Gathering, the CHARGE and camp. We were anticipating another Lenten season. Little did we know what was coming and how drastically our lives would be changed in just one month.

 The youth did none of the things they were looking forward to and it is an unfortunate reality of our time right now, that those events are not happening again this year. Our Lenten season came to an abrupt halt. Each month, I hoped that this would be the month that we would return to a more normal life, but here we are, still doing virtual and drive -in worship services. As I plan Lent for this year, I wonder, will we be able to return to worship in the sanctuary in this Lenten season?

 There is hope. We now have the vaccine, but it will take a while for enough people to get it to get us to a place of immunity as a community. At this writing, the positivity rate in Michigan is steadily going down and we are getting closer to our goal of seeing it sustained in Barry and Ionia Counties at 3%. So perhaps we will be back together in worship before too long. This is my hope and prayer. Your council will be keeping you updated on when this can happen.

 And we sure learned a lot this year! Last year, we just stopped having our Lenten

services and it took me a few weeks to learn how to do Facebook live to get our Sunday services out to you. Now we know how to broadcast in the parking lot, and we are now able to live stream. So this year, we will have services in one way or another.

For Ash Wednesday, we will most likely live stream the service and offer ashes and communion in the parking lot. Little baggies of ashes are being made and can be picked up at the back door of the church starting on Sunday, Feb. 14 to take home so you can impose ashes with your families if you chose to watch the live stream or follow the bulletin, which will be available on our website. These baggies will be mailed with the bulletins to those on our mailing list.

 Because we only got to a couple of our Lenten services on the theme of Dealing with Change last year, I have decided to repeat that theme for this year. We certainly have learned to deal with change is ways we never dreamed possible this year. If we get enough volunteers to be on our tech team to get the live stream out, we will be able to have the services in this way if we do not get back into the sanctuary. We will not have the drive-in service for the midweek services due to darkness. We will also not have our soup suppers this year.

**Here are the themes each week of Lent:**

Wed. Feb. 24: Change of Season

Wed. March 3: Change of Habit

Wed. March 10: Change of Circumstances

Wed. March 17: Change of Heart

Wed. March 25: Change of Plans

I hope that this Lenten season will be one of spiritual growth as we continue to draw near to God to give us a solid ground in the midst of an ever-changing season.

 Pastor Becky +

**COUNCIL REPORT**

 Pastor opened the meeting with devotion and prayer based on John 1:14, “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.”

 Jerry Engle was appointed Interim Trustee. Jerry will serve while Jim Elenbaas is unable to due to health issues. Jerry was welcomed to the meeting and thanked for his willingness to serve.

 Karen reported that all the year-end financial reports have been completed. Benevolence and missions have been paid.

 Council discussed possibly having the Trustees and others conduct a walkthrough of the church to make a list of repairs and projects that need to be completed. A walk through of the parsonage property by a Trustee was also discussed. After the walk throughs, a master list of needs can be created for the Trustees and possibly have volunteers choose a project to complete.

 Worship committee met recently to discuss Lent and Easter. They are recommending the Ash Wednesday service be a live stream and parking lot service. Ashes will be provided in a small baggie and people can apply them to themselves during the service led by Pastor. Ashes will be made available the Sunday before Ash Wednesday or can be picked up at the church. Ashes may also be mailed to shut-ins with the bulletin. For Easter, they are working on two plans. One for if we can resume services in the sanctuary and one for drive-in service.

 Paul is looking for assistance with the live streaming and radio broadcasting to take turns on Sundays. Terry Speese has volunteered. Pastor has asked for additional volunteers from the congregation. Paul and Martha will write procedures for the live streaming and radio broadcast.

 Pastor has arranged supply pastors for her Sundays off during the first six months of the year. February is Kayla Cole and March is Pastor Anton. April will be someone from the congregation. A volunteer is needed. May is Pastor Polly Standley, and June is Pastor Marsha Shultz.

 Paul reported the hot spot to provide internet service is working much better than the church internet. The hot spot service is costing $20 per month. Discussion was held on internet and cell phone service for the church and parsonage.

 Discussion was held on ELCA Good Gifts. We missed giving to this worthy cause over the holiday as we were not in the church to have the tree with the ornaments as we usually do. It was suggested that we could put up a tree when we return to indoor worship and have the giving at that time. There were suggestions to call it a “Celebration Tree” or “Giving Tree” and leave it up to use for other giving projects as well. There were also suggestions to have it set up as part of a Welcome Back fellowship time.

**ANNUAL MEETING**

 Thank you to everyone who returned you ballot for the annual meeting. We appreciate everyone’s participation and understanding as we had a very different annual meeting experience this year. The ballot for Council and Board members was overwhelmingly approved. The ballot proposals were approved as follows:

* 2021 Budget – 43 yes, 1 no
* Replacement of two AC units – 43 yes, 1 no
* Replacement of the lawnmower used for the church and parsonage, 43 yes, 1 no
* Exterior paint and repair of the church, 44 yes, 0 no

If you have any questions about the election or the information included in the packet, please talk with Martha Yoder, Paul Meade or any Council member.

**ASH WEDNESDAY**

 Ash Wednesday is February 17th. Bags of ashes will be available to be picked up in the back entrance of the church beginning on Sunday, Feb. 14 through the drive in Ash Wednesday service on Wed. Feb. 17. You may use them at home for marking foreheads with the cross during the Ash Wed. service or any time on that day. The bulletin will be available on our website.

**TECH TEAM**

Zion is starting a tech team to do the live stream for our services. Paul Meade will be glad to train people. Please let Pastor Becky or Paul know if you would like to serve in this way.

**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!

**MEN’S WEDNESDAY COFFEE**

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

**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.

**SUNDAYS IN FEBRUARY**

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

**February 7- Drive-In Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Jolene Griffin

Trustee: Dan Zylstra

Offering Counters: Mary Makley, Martha Yoder

**February 14- Drive in Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Jerry Engle

Offering Counters: Diane Griffin, Carlotta Willard

**February 17- Ash Wednesday 7:00 PM Drive in**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Paul Meade

Trustee: Mike Johnson

Offering Counters: Jerry Engle, Brenda Bite

**February 21- Drive In, No Communion**

Presider: Kayla Cole

Elder: Jolene Griffin

Trustee: Dan Zylstra

Offering Counters: Doug Mackenzie, Mike Johnson

**February 28- Drive in, Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Jerry Engle

Offering Counters: Mary Makley, Martha Yoder