**ZION’S MESSENGER**

**January 2022 + Zion Lutheran Church + 269-367-4817**

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Happy New Year! We begin this year, still in the season of Christmas and I hope that you are finding ways to continue to celebrate the season. The 12 days of Christmas takes us to January 6, the day of Epiphany. This is when the wise men should show up in our nativity scenes, though historically, we know that it takes them approximately 2 years to get to Bethlehem and by then, the Holy Family were not longer in the stable, having found housing. If you really love celebrating Christmas well into the New Year, you can honor the Scandinavian tradition of St. Knute’s Day (Jan. 12) as the official end of Christmas. And if you really, really love celebrating Christmas, you can honor the ancient practice of celebrating until Candlemas (Feb. 2) which is the day of the Presentation of Jesus in the temple. What ever length of time that you will keep Christmas this new year, one thing that I always do is keep the outdoor lights up through January. Seeing people’s lights bring me joy and I want my lights to bring joy. I’m always so disappointed to see the lights go out in January.

Speaking of joy, our board of Evangelism and council have chosen a verse to be the theme verse for Zion in 2022. I invite you to memorize this verse, to post it in places that are visible to you every day as a continually reminder that we should spend this year focusing on joy.

**“The joy of the Lord is my strength.” Nehemiah 8:10**

We don’t know what 2022 will bring us, but I’m sure that you all join me in hope that finally we can see a year that is an improvement over all challenges and heartbreaks that both 2020 and 2021 have brought us. I pray that 2022 will bring us on the other side of the pandemic. We have the assurance that no matter what the future holds for us in our world, in our personal lives, in our church life, that God is with us in everything. We have the Christmas promise of Emanuel, God with us, to carry us into the future. God will certainly bring new and good things to us as well as be with us in hard times.

How wonderful to know that we can find our strength by focusing on the joy of the Lord.

You will see this verse woven throughout our live together at Zion. This theme will drive decisions that are made, events that will happen and all the ways that we, at Zion, will be active in the life of our community. We were able to do so many wonderful things last year and I look forward to repeating some of the events and to finding new ones to enliven our lives and congregation as we can share joy among each other and into our community.

Be blessed and joyful in this new year!

Pastor Becky+

Thank you to everyone for your generous Christmas gift to Terry and I! We so appreciate all of you!

Pastor Becky and Terry

**THANK YOU!**

Thank you to everyone who contributed and helped deliver the packages for the Lakewood Community Council's annual Christmas Baskets this year. A special thank you to Claude and Mary Smith. They each received $250.00 grants from Thrivent Financial.  Mary's $ grant was used to purchase gifts for 7 girls and 6 boys. She had the Sunday School class help wrap the gifts on December 5th. With some remaining money, she purchased socks. Claude’s grant was used to purchase a large crate of apples. The Co-op Elevator used their forklift to the crate out of the truck and a group of men helped Claude bag the apples before putting them in boxes for each family. All items collected were taken to Central the week of packing.

Did you know that Claude is now the president of the LCC? Merry Christmas!

**THANK YOU!**

Dear members of Zion, on behalf of the food pantry of Battle Creek, I would like to thank you for your amazing donation canned, boxed, and bagged food for our pantry. It is greatly appreciated. Our thank you and sincere wishes for a blessed and very merry Christmas to all of you!

Sincerely, Judy Monty

**2022 ANNUAL MEETING**

The annual congregational meeting will be an in person meeting this year on Sunday, January 16, 2022.  The meeting will be held immediately following worship service.  At this meeting, we will vote on Council and Board members and the church budget for 2022.  Please plan to attend this important meeting.  We need at least 25 people in attendance for a quorum.

**DECORATION DONATIONS**

Hopefully everyone had a blessed Christmas, enjoying the true meaning of the season!

As you start to take down your Christmas decorations, if there are any you no longer have room for or no longer want, please consider donating to our 2022 Free Christmas Tree Farm that we will host in November.

This year the fellowship hall was full of trees, ornaments, decorations, wrapping paper and so much Christmas spirit. The items were free for those in our community who needed Christmas decorations.

If you need someone to pick them up from your house, please let Jolene or Martha know. We will make arrangements.

**CONFIRMATION LUNCHES**

We have a new group of our youth starting their confirmation journey. These initial classes will take place right after church the days listed below.

  We’re asking members of the congregation to support our youth and provide a meal for them & Pastor during their class. Anything is appreciated! For now, we are requesting pre-wrapped food be used. The kids will eat in the gathering room so everyone can be well spread out.

  If you are on coffee fellowship one of these months and plan to make a meal one of these weeks, please let us know and we’ll plan on that for the week.

Thank you for helping in any way!

The dates are as follows:

Jan. 2

Jan. 30

Feb. 6

Feb. 20

**SUNDAYS IN JANUARY**

**January 2- In Sanctuary & Drive-in, Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Paul Meade

Trustee: Mike Johnson

Safety Person: Jerry Engle

Offering Counters: Doug Mackenzie, Mike Johnson

**January 9 In Sanctuary & Drive-in, Communion,**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Jolene Griffin

Trustee: Dan Zylstra

Safety Person: Diane Griffin

Offering Counters: Mary Makley, Martha Yoder

**January 16- In Sanctuary & Drive-in, Communion, Annual Meeting after Worship**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Jerry Engle

Safety Person: Ken Heise

Offering Counters: Diane Griffin & Carlotta Willard

**January 23- In Sanctuary & Drive-in, No Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Paul Meade

Trustee: Mike Johnson

Safety Person: Dan Zylstra

Acolyte: Emil Meyers

Offering Counters: Jerry Engle, Carlotta Willard

**January 30- In Sanctuary & Drive-in, Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Jolene Griffin

Trustee: Dan Zylstra

Safety Person: Jerry Engle

Offering Counters: Doug Mackenzie, Mike Johnson