**ZION’S MESSENGER**

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

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Feb. 2 is a significant day for us. It is best known at Ground Hog’s Day, a day we tend to be hopeful for having a ground hog determine how much longer we will have to endure winter. Now, we all know that a ground hog is not a weather expert and, living in Michigan, we also know we will most likely have winter well into March.

Feb. 2 is a significant day in the church year. It is the day of the Presentation of Jesus in the temple. This was how his parents carried out the Jewish tradition of presenting their first-born son in the temple at 40 days old. In the temple on that day, two elderly saints who were servants and prophets, Simeon and Anna, recognized this 40 day old Jesus as the Messiah that he was. They were filled with joy that they were able to see the Messiah before their lives ended.

Another name for this day is Candlemas and it signifies not only the presentation of Jesus but also the end of the Christmas season! So, if you still have your tree or decorations up, its ok! My outdoor lights have stayed on until this day. The name Candlemas comes from an old tradition of bring all of the candles that will be used this next year into the church for a blessing.

Some ancient traditions also viewed this day to determine whether it would be the end of winter or not. If Feb. 2 was a sunny day, winter would continue. If it was cloudy, then winter would end. This is likely where the idea of ground hog day came from.

Many of you may be familiar with the movie, Ground Hog’s Day. A weather man named Phil Conners, played by Bill Murray, was sent to do a report on Punxsutawaney Phil, the ground hog in the town of Pennsylvania with this name on Feb. 2. He was not happy with this assignment and did not treat the people in this town or on his crew well. He ends up in a loop of time, where every day was Ground Hog’s Day and the same things happened over and over. The thing that broke the loop and got him out of this day was when he realized he could be a good person and learned to love.

That movie and theme has been on my mind this year as it feels in many ways that we are living in a sort of Ground Hog Day like existence with surges of Covid-19 happening over and over again. Once again, we do not know how things are going to be, especially as we look ahead to Lent. It’s been a very frustrating and concerning two years for us. Seeing the negative ways that people are treating each other over the pandemic as well as other current issues such as racism, gender rights and equality, voting rights and politics has been equally difficult. Perhaps the thing that can get us out of this loop is the theme of the other holiday that we celebrate this month, Valentine’s Day, a day focused on love. As Christians, love is much more than romantic feelings, it is an action word. The Bible is full of messages to us to love one another, to look out for the needs of others, to treat each other as God treats us, with unconditional love. Jesus even summed up all of the law into two laws: love God and love your neighbor as yourself. This is not always easy to be loving toward those who are not so loving, but this is what we are called to do. We are called to be the lights of God’s love in our world. The love of God is light that shines in the darkness of our world, and we are bearers of this light of love.

Let us live love and let love break cycles of negativity and anger in our lives. And remember our focus verse for this year, “The joy of the Lord is my strength” (Nehemiah 8:10) as joy and love go hand in hand to make a difference in our world.

Pastor Becky +

**ANNUAL MEETING**

The Annual Meeting was held January 16 after worship service. While we did not have a quorum present, we did receive enough ballots to pass the election of officers and board members and approve the purchase of a new camera system for the sanctuary. The annual meeting packets provide very good summary information for 2021. Copies were put in the mailboxes of those not present at the meeting. If you have questions on any of the annual meeting information, please see Martha Yoder, Paul Meade or any Council member.

**BOARD OF EDUCATION MEETING**

The board of education will meet Sunday, February 13, after worship. We will discuss spring & summer plans for our youth. If you are interested in helping or want to share ideas, please join us for the meeting!

**ACCOMPANIST NEEDED**

We are in need of fill-in musicians to occasionally play for services. If you play the piano or organ, or know someone who does, please let Pastor or Paul Meade know. Thank you.

**SOUP R BOWL SUNDAY**

**COLLECTION FOR FEED THE NEED**

We are excited to announce Zion has kicked off a soup and cracker collection to coincide with Super Bowl Sunday. The collection will benefit “Feed the Need” a Woodland organization that provides free weekend food bags to children and youth who may not have access to enough food over the weekend. Feed the Need currently provides food bags to 82 children in the Lakewood School District. Zion’s goal is to sponsor at least one weekend by collecting 10-1/2 ounce cans of soup and individual serving size packages of crackers (saltines, goldfish, etc.)  Please consider donating to this important need. Donations can be brought to the Fellowship Hall. You may also designate an offering gift to purchase these items. A soup fellowship to count our collection and see how well we do in helping to Feed the Need is planned for February 13th following worship if it is safe to do so. Watch for more details. If you have questions, please see Jolene or Martha. Thank you!

**COUNCIL AND BOARD LIST**

Attached to the newsletter is the updated Council and Board list along with a brief description of each board. A huge thank you to the members of the 2021 nominations committee, Ken/Karen Heise, Lisa Krikke, Buffy Meyers, and Jill Plummer, for the great job they did filling our slate for the coming year. A heartfelt thank you all who agreed to serve in the coming year. It takes many hands to attend to all the needs we have as a congregation, and we look forward to a busy year filled with worship and activity.

**SUNDAYS IN FEBRUARY**

**February 6- In Sanctuary & Drive-in, Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Paul Meade

Trustee: Dan Zylstra

Safety Person: Diane Griffin

Offering Counters: Mary Makley, Martha Yoder

**February 13 In Sanctuary & Drive-in, Communion,**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Jolene Griffin

Trustee: Jerry Engle

Safety Person: Ken Heise

Offering Counters: Diane Griffin & Carlotta Willard

**February 20- In Sanctuary & Drive-in, Communion, Annual Meeting after Worship**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Mike Johnson

Safety Person: Dan Zylstra

Offering Counters: Jerry Engle, Carlotta Willard

**February 27- In Sanctuary & Drive-in, No Communion**

Paul Meade

Elder: Paul Meade

Trustee: Dan Zylstra

Safety Person: Jerry Engle

Offering Counters: Doug Mackenzie, Mike Johnson

**Sunday School Opening**

**\*When Sunday School Resumes\***

Feb 6: Martha Yoder

Feb 13: Pastor Becky

Feb 20: Dan Utterback

Feb 27: Martha Yoder