**ZION’S MESSENGER**

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

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My favorite season of the church year has always been Lent. As a child and teen, I loved attending midweek Lenten services. For one reason, I have always been drawn to the hymns of Lent (yes, I really do like hymns in minor keys!) and back then, we did not have coffee fellowship after church on Sundays, but we did after Lenten services. The smell of coffee lingering in a church fellowship hall, always takes me back to those childhood Lenten services.

Another reason I love Lent is because it is a season of hope. Lent always starts in winter but ends at some point in spring. Lent literally means, “lengthening of days” so as we see the daylight lengthen, especially after the time change, we see the hope of the end of the cold and long season of winter. Though, as people who live in Michigan, we know that winter can still try to hang on into spring, but we know this will soon come to an end. I experience wonder every Lent as gradually, each week following our evening service, it gets lighter and lighter out.

This year, Lent starts as late as it can start. We will be in the season of Lent through all of March and halfway through April, so we will get more of a sense of the coming of light and spring this Lent.

Two years ago, none of us ever dreamed that when the pandemic began, it would still be with us now. As we see signs of hope and new life during this season of Lent, we all hope to see the end of the pandemic during this Lenten season. This is certainly my prayer.

Often, we view Lent as a time of spiritual discipline, of giving something up, of a focus on suffering as we journey with Jesus to the cross. Though we may still observe these things, I also believe that we have been through 2 years of Lent. We have suffered. We have given things up. Our lives have been changed in ways we never imagined possible. Yet, I hope that also, we have experienced God’s presence, strength, and comfort in this season. As we have journeyed with Jesus to the cross and will do so again, while we do not want to forget or minimize his suffering for us, let us also focus on the purpose of the cross and this suffering. It was to bring to us new life, forgiveness, and hope in all things. There is very much a non-minor key, positive theme of Lent as well. And we sure do need a positive theme this year.

Lent is a good time to start new things. I hope to see more of you join us in the midweek services and return to Sunday worship, if you have not already. We will continue to offer the drive-in option and live stream the services so you can participate in whatever way you are most comfortable. But if you do feel comfortable returning to in person activities, it would be great to see more people return to church during this season of hope and new life.

Our theme for the Lenten services this year engages us in opening up our lives and our hearts to experience new ways that God will touch us. The theme of “Open My Life, Lord” will take us through our senses to experience opening up to God. This is certainly a message of hope and joy.

Have a blessed Lenten journey!

Pastor Becky +

**LENTEN WEEKLY TOPICS**

* March 9: Open My Eyes
* March 16: Open My Hands
* March 23: Open My Ears
* March 30: Open My Heart
* April 6: Open My Life

**SOUP “R” BOWL COLLECTION**

Thank you to everyone for your generosity and support for our Super “R” Bowl game to collect soup and crackers for Feed the Need.  Over the four quarters (four Sundays) of our game, we collected 203 cans of soup and 718 individual packets of crackers.  On Tuesday, February 22nd, Jerry and Carol Engle, Lyle Sandbrook, Jr, and Martha Yoder loaded the items (In the pouring rain!!) and delivered them to Feed the Need in Woodland.  Two volunteers were there to help and expressed their appreciation for what Zion was contributing.  In addition, Tammy Brodbeck, Founder of Feed the Need said, “Thank you for all the food, financial and prayers from our community,”  With this support, Feed the Need is able to go into the school every other week and supply anyone who is in need with a “weekend survival” bag.  The bag contains breakfast, lunch, dinner, and snacks.  There were also financial contributions for Feed the Need which are greatly appreciated to purchase needed items, especially protein items like individual servings of peanut butter and tuna fish.  We will be sending these contributions on to Feed the Need soon.  Again, thank you for helping children in need in our community.  Feed the Need serves between 80 and 90 children at any time and is open to anyone who asks for help.

**VISIONING FOR ZION’S FUTURE**

A new group is being formed to create a vision for Zion’s future.  If you are interested in being a part of this group, there is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex.  For more information, see Paul Meade or any member of Council.

**LAY LEADERS/PREACHERS NEEDED**

Lay leaders/preachers are needed for May 23, July 24, and August 21. See Pastor Becky if you are interested. Thank you to those who are willing to serve in this important way!

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**ZION YOUTH BOWLING**

Zion Youth are invited bowling!

On Sunday, March 27 at 12, Zion's youth are invited to join us for bowling and pizza at Buddy's in Lake-Odessa. We have two lanes reserved and look forward to reconnecting. If you are able to join us, please let Jolene know.

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**EASTER EGG HUNT**

Zion will host an Easter Egg Hunt following service on Easter morning, Sunday, April 17.We're asking the congregation to consider donating individually wrapped candy and coins for the eggs by April 3rd. Non-chocolate candy or gum are also requested.

Please bring your kids, grandkids or any other kiddos to our Easter Egg Hunt!

**SUNDAYS IN MARCH**

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

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Jolene Griffin

Trustee: Jerry Engle

Safety Person: Diane Griffin

Offering Counters: Mary Makley, Martha Yoder

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

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Mike Johnson

Safety Person: Ken Heise

Offering Counters: Diane Griffin & Carlotta Willard

**March 20- In Sanctuary & Drive-in, Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Elder: Paul Meade

Trustee: Dan Zylstra

Safety Person: Dan Zylstra

Offering Counters: Jerry Engle, Carlotta Willard

**March 27- In Sanctuary & Drive-in, Communion**

Pastor Polly Standley

Elder: Jolene Griffin

Trustee: Jerry Engle

Safety Person: Jerry Engle

Offering Counters: Doug Mackenzie, Mike Johnson

**Sunday School Opening**

Mar 6: Pastor Becky

Mar 13: Dan Utterback

Mar 20: Martha Yoder

Mar 27: Martha Yoder