**ZION’S MESSENGER**

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

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We begin a new year in the church with this Advent season upon us again. I hope to see more people attend worship at Zion through this holiday season and beyond. Now would be a great time to invite people who might be looking for a church home where they can experience Zion’s warm welcome.

Though the 1st Sunday in Advent has already past, I began a mini-series entitled “We Hear the Advent Angels”. In this series we will learn about angels and their role in sharing God’s good news to us. The story of Jesus’ birth is full of angelic voices.

We began with a story that is often left out of the nativity narrative though it begins the Gospel of Luke. The birth of story of John the Baptist, who is Jesus’ cousin, is very important as John had the role of preparing the way for Jesus. His nativity story tells us of an angel named Gabriel who brought the news of John’s arrival to a couple long past child bearing years. John’s father, Zechariah, is visited by Gabriel to be given this news. This is so unbelievable to him that he is rendered speechless until John is born and his announces his name. From this story we learn that with God, nothing is impossible.

Then we will hear of Gabriel bring the same impossible sounding message to Mary, that she will be the mother of God’s son Jesus! Mary responds in faith even though this pregnancy will bring much difficulty for her and for her fiancé, Joseph.

Joseph is not left out of this story either. He also is visited by an angel (not named, but likely also Gabriel, as his role was a messenger archangel) in a dream who explains how this pregnancy actually happened and who the baby is. Joseph also believes the message of the angel and takes his role as the adoptive, human father to Jesus.

As we will hear the Christmas story though the Children’s program and our Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services, we will hear about a multitude of angels proclaiming the joyous news about the birth of Jesus to a group of shepherds.

Angels have a later role with the wise men who come to see Jesus by giving them a warning not to return to Herod but to return home by another way. Angels had an important role in saving the new Christ child’s life in his first years.

Are angels among us now? Perhaps they are, and during this Advent and Christmas season, let our ears of faith be open to hearing their message to us today. Come to the services this month to hear more about the Advent and Christmas angels and the great glad tidings that they tell!

A blessed Advent and Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to all of you!

Pastor Becky +

**SUPPLY PASTORS**

**Lay leaders/preachers are needed to start the new year off:**

**Feb. 26**

**March 26**

**Please let Pastor Becky know if you are willing to take on of these Sundays!**

**BLUE CHRISTMAS**

The Lakewood Area Ministerial Association will he holding **Blue Christmas** Services at Zion on Wed. Dec. 14 at 1 PM and 7 PM. Zion has held these in the past, and it’s exciting to have the area pastors leading the service this year. I hope that we will see more people attend from the local churches and the community. Blue Christmas, also called Longest Night, services have the special focus of acknowledging the fact that the holidays are difficult for those who are experiencing any kind of loss, loneliness and other challenging life issues. You are invited to bring pictures of people you will miss this Christmas. There will be candle lighting, singing of carols, and prayers to lend a sense of comfort and healing as our losses are named.

**CHRISTMAS WEEKEND!**

This year, Christmas Eve is on Saturday which puts Christmas Day on Sunday. We will have worship opportunities on both days. From the combination of the Facebook and paper polls, the most were for 5:00 pm. There is no time that meets the needs of everyone, but this year, we will try an earlier service. It will be the same candlelight service of lessons and carols that we have every year. Having an earlier time will help for those who will return for the Christmas morning service.

**THANK YOU!**

Thank you so muchfor the gift basket that you gave me for Pastor appreciation! I love all of the gifts and do very much feel appreciated!

~Pastor Becky

**MESSAGE FROM THE TREASURER**

At our annual meeting, the 2022 Benevolence (Mission Support) commitment of $4200 was approved. Through November, designations have been made in the amount of $3,235.00, $965 short of our commitment.

What is Mission Support?  As members of the ELCA, we do mission together through our financial giving. We do God’s work in ways that no individual, congregation or synod can do alone.

Mission Support is the portion of our weekly financial offering that our congregation shares with our synod and the churchwide organization, the other two expressions of our church.

Please prayerfully consider designating a portion of your offering to Benevolence.  Thank you.

**THANKOFFERING**

The ZLCW will be having its annual Thankoffering Service on January 22, 2023.  It had to be postponed from November, because of the unusual snowstorm.  Please put it on your calendar.  We look forward to having a variety of ladies participate in the service that Sunday. If you have any questions, please contact Buffy.

**CHRISTMAS BELLS AND BRASS**

You're invited to celebrate the season by joining us for Christmas Bells and Brass at Pleasant Valley United Brethren Church on Dec. 4th at 3PM with reception to follow at 13120 Bell Rd, Lake Odessa MI 48849

**LUTHERAN WORLD RELIEF**

All gifts given through the congregation to Lutheran World Relief (you can indicate your gift on your offering envelope) will be doubled up to $200,00 through December 31.

**THANK YOU**

The Board of Evangelism wants to thank everyone who donated to Zion's collection for Manna's Market of socks and underwear.  Jayne Flanigan told board members that there is always a big need for these items as they must be new. For underwear, we collected 117 for ladies, 134 for girls, 13 for men and 74 for boys totaling 338.  For socks, we collected 35 pairs for ladies, 62 pairs for girls, 12 pairs for toddlers, 29 pairs for men and 28 pairs for boys totaling 166.  We also received 6 men's undershirts.  Thank you to Thrivent Financial for giving Jerry Engle a $250.00 grant that was used to purchase some of these items. All were packed on Giving Tuesday, November 29th and delivered to Manna's Market on Wednesday morning. Zion is blessed to be able to help others in our community.

**COMMUNITY DINNERS**

Zion is one of the churches that takes turns serving the community dinner held on Thursdays at the Central United Methodist Church.  And, it is Zion’s turn again on December 15th!  We are in need of volunteers to help set-up, serve, and clean up the meal.  We are also responsible for providing a dessert to accompany the meal**.  If you can help in any way, we need you!  Please let Martha Yoder know if you are able to help with this.**

**ZION FREE CHRISTMAS TREE AND MARKET 2022**

Thank you just isn’t enough to say to everyone who donated, encouraged others to donate, helped carry all the items to the Fellowship Hall, organized and worked the event, baked cookies, helped our guests and carried items to their cars, and cleaned up. You were tremendous, and this mission was an incredible blessing to people who were truly in need. In all, we gave out more than 60 trees, hundreds of ornaments, lights, and décor. In fact, it was so successful Friday, that we weren’t able to open Saturday as we have given out almost everything we had.

People were so appreciative. We had at least 150 people for the event including young families, young couples, senior citizens, and more. So many told us that we were a blessing to them by being here and helping them and thanked Zion. A number said they had not had trees in years. Others were just starting out and these things were just not in their budget. This year we also had a table of new items of stocking stuffers for kids.

  We’re already planning for next year’s event. As you get your Christmas items out, if you have things that no longer meet your needs, please bring them to Zion. Also let you friends know they can bring things to Zion any time and leave them inside the back entrance.

  Next year we’d like to have at least 75 trees available in addition to all the other items. We’re exploring some options for raising funds to help purchase trees. Watch for more information on how you can help!

  Again, thank you to everyone who helped make this possible.

**ANNUAL MEETING**

Please plan to attend the Annual Meeting on January 15th. This is an important meeting to elect officers and board members as well as other items requiring congregational approval. One item for congregational consideration is approving an expenditure to upgrade and improve church signage. There will be a potluck dinner following the meeting. Mark your calendars and plan to be at Zion on January 15th.

**NOMINATIONS FOR 2023**

The Nominations Committee is working on filling officer and board positions for 2023. If you have any interest in serving in a specific position or board, please let one of the Nominations Committee members or Martha know. Also, if asked to serve, please give the request thoughtful consideration. Nominations Committee members are Doug MacKenzie, Mary Makley, and Claude Smith.

**WOMEN’S COFFEE FELLOWSHIP**

Women’s Coffee Fellowship will be Thursday, December 8, at 9:00 am at the C&R restaurant. All women are welcome! It is a time for a short devotion, sharing, conversation and supporting one another. Naomi Wilson will lead the December devotion. Note that we have decided on the second Thursday as the regular date for this monthly gathering. Hope you can join us!

**PRAYER SHAWLS IN**

**NEW LOCATION**

The prayer shawls were recently moved to a new location and are now located in the narthex under the east table. They were moved to be more accessible to anyone who would like to take one to give away. Each prayer shawl has a card inside the plastic bag with the shawl that you can write a note in and sign. In addition, in the far left drawer of the table is a folder with a prayer for healing that can be inserted if appropriate. The folder also contains a log for you to fill out when you take a shawl to indicate who it is being given to so we do not duplicate. We hope this move will encourage greater sharing of our prayer shawls to those who can use some comfort and remembering.

If you have any questions, please talk with any member of the Evangelism Committee.

**SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER**

**December 4- In Sanctuary Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Acolyte: Kole Hokanson

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Mike Johnson

Safety Person: Diane Griffin

Offering Counters: Mary Makley & Martha Yoder

**December 11- In Sanctuary Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Acolyte: Lexi Griffin

Elder: Paul Meade

Trustee: Dan Zylstra

Safety Person: Ken Heise

Offering Counters: Diane Griffin & Carlotta Willard

**December 18- Sunday School Program**

Acolyte: Anna Zylstra

Elder: Jolene Griffin

Trustee: Jerry Engle

Safety Person: Dan Zylstra

Offering Counters: Jerry Engle & Carlotta Willard

**December 25 In Sanctuary Communion,**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Acolyte: Levi Griffin

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Mike Johnson

Safety Person: Jerry Engle

Offering Counters: Doug Mackenzie & Mike Johnson

**SUNDAY SCHOOL OPENING**

Dec 4: Dan Utterback

Dec 11: Dian Griffin/Rocky Johnson

Dec. 18: Sunday School Program

Dec. 25: No Sunday School