**ZION’S MESSENGER**

**April 2023 + Zion Lutheran Church + 269-367-4817**

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I was so excited the other day as I did the early spring walk around the yard and saw a lot of daffodils already making their way into new life. In spite of how cold it has been and late snow and ice we have gotten, they know it is spring and time for them to come to life. They are hardly flowers for sure. Daffodils along with all the other bulb flowers are a yearly reminder of Easter. Though they stay dormant in their bulbs in the dirt after they are done blooming and through the winter snow, they always return to life in the spring. They are nature’s and God’s reminder to us that Easter is all about new life coming after death.

We celebrate Easter on April 9. I sure hope that we have a warm and dry day to cheer our spirits and for the children to have their Easter egg hunt outdoors.

The message of Easter is so wonderful and so powerful. In all of the various ways that we experience deaths and losses in life, the Easter message is that Jesus lives and gives us life in the midst of death and loss. We never need to lose hope because the promise of Easter is about live. There is a line in one of my favorite Easter hymns “Because He Lives” by Bill Gaither that says, “Because He lives I can face tomorrow, because He Lives all fear is gone…. And life is worth the living just because He lives”

What a great gift we have in the resurrection of Jesus, who defeated sin and death for us on Easter. And this is a reality for us every day, not just in the Easter season.

Before we get to Easter, though, there is Holy Week. To really grasp the joy of Easter, we have to also go to Holy week, hear again about all of the betrayal and suffering that Jesus went through to get to the cross and of his death on the cross. If we skip from the Triumphal Entry to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday to the joyful resurrection on Easter, we miss so much.

This year, I hope that you will take part in the Holy Week services, either in person or online, whatever works best for you. You might even consider reading the passion of Jesus for your devotions that week. This year, we are in the Gospel of Matthew, but you can read it from any Gospel. I often like to listen to one of my favorite pieces of music during Holy Week, “St. Matthew’s Passion” by J.S. Bach. I was in my college oratorio society, and we performed this work every Good Friday. The words set to music always brings me to tears and they touch so deep in my heart.

We begin the week with Palm Sunday and this year will focus just on the events of that day, Jesus triumphal entry into Jerusalem. We return for Maundy Thursday on April 6 and hear about the events of the last supper. And then Good Friday, on April 7 to go to the cross with Jesus. There will also be a community Good Friday service at Central United Methodist Church at 1:00 that you are welcome to attend.

Of course, the services of Holy Week conclude with celebrating Easter! Come for the Easter breakfast at 9am and the worship service at 10:30. The children’s Easter egg hunt will be after church.

 Enjoy the return of spring to nature and watch for the flowers!

A blessed Holy Week to all!

Pastor Becky +

**COMMUNITY EASTER EGG HUNT**

**APRIL 8**

Zion is a member of the Lakewood Area Chamber of Commerce and we will be participating in this year’s Community Easter Egg Hunt on Saturday, April 8th. The egg hunt schedule is 10:30 for kids 3 and under, 10:50 for ages 4-7, and 11:10 am for ages 8-12. Zion donated candy and helped stuff about 4,000 eggs! Zion will have a game station at the park. Kids can try their skill at tossing a ring around the Easter Bunny. Everyone wins a prize. We will be distributing information about Zion. As always, we can use helpers so if you are able to assist, please let Martha know. Please bring your kids and grandkids to enjoy this community event. About 400 kids and their parents are expected.

**COMMUNITY DINNER APRIL 13**

Zion’s next turn to host the community dinner held at Central UMC in Lake Odessa is April 13th. We need volunteers to set-up, serve, clean-up and provide fellowship to those attending the dinner. In addition, the hosting church provides dessert, so we are in need of desserts to serve. If you can help by volunteering or making a dessert, please let Martha know.

**PLAN FOR LOCKING CHURCH DOORS DURING WORSHIP**

Ensuring the safety and well-being of those worshiping at Zion is of the highest priority. Following discussion at the annual meeting, a ballot was mailed to all of Zion’s confirmed members seeking input on whether the church doors should be locked during worship services. 43 ballots were returned; 22 preferring the doors be locked and 21 preferring the doors not be locked.

The safety committee drafted a procedure to implement locking the church doors during worship services. The procedure was approved by Church Council on March 14, 2023, and the safety committee is working to implement the procedure beginning May 7, 2023. The procedure calls on the Trustee of the day to lock doors once worship begins and the Safety Person of the Day to monitor for late arrivals. A copy of the procedure is attached to the newsletter for your review. The safety committee will monitor implementation of the procedure and review its effectiveness after we have had it in place for several months.

If you have questions or concerns, please talk with any member of the safety committee or council.

**UPDATE ON**

**PASTORAL CALL PROCESS-**

**SURVEY DEADLINE APRIL 2**

Please remember to return your survey by April 2nd. If you need a survey, there are copies on the table in the Narthex. The survey responses provide Council with valuable information that will be used to complete the Congregational Profile. Several council members will be meeting on April 4th to use the survey responses to complete the profile. Thank you!

**CHURCH REPAIR OR MAINTENANCE NEEDS**

There is a new form you can use to alert the Trustees to the need for a repair or maintenance at the church. Copies of the new form are on the table in the Narthex. If you note something that needs attention, please complete the form and either put it in the Trustee’s mailbox or hand it to done of the Trustees. Using the form will help us keep track of requests. Thank you.

**SUMMER WORSHIP TO**

**REMAIN AT 10:30 AM**

Council voted to leave worship at 10:30 am this summer rather than make it an hour earlier. This is in consideration of our Pastor retiring and relying on supply Pastors. Many of our supply Pastors travel some distance to come to Zion. It was felt moving the worship time to 9:30 might be a hardship on our supply Pastors or make it more difficult for us to find Pastors willing to come to lead worship at Zion.

**VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL**

**JUNE 27**

We are excited to be able to hold VBS again this year using the one-day format. VBS will begin with registration and lunch at 11:30-12:30. The kids will be in session from 12:30-5:00 and at 5:00 it will close with dinner for the families. We need lots of volunteers to make VBS work, everything from group leaders to station workers to kitchen help. There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex. If you can help during VBS, with setting up or cleaning up, please let us know. If you have questions, please talk with Karen, Martha, or Ruth.

**COFFEE FELLOWSHIP**

Cindy and Dan Utterback

Lisa Krikke

**SUNDAYS IN APRIL**

**April 2- In Sanctuary Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Acolyte: Kole Hokanson

Elder: Jolene Griffin

Trustee: Mike Johnson

Safety Person: Ken Heise

Offering Counters: Mary Makley & Martha Yoder

**April 9- In Sanctuary Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Acolyte: Lexi Griffin

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Martha Ydoer

Safety Person: Dan Zylstra

Offering Counters: Diane Griffin & Carlotta Willard

**April 16- In Sanctuary Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Acolyte: Anna Zylstra

Elder: Buffy Meyers

Trustee: Jerry Engle

Safety Person: Jerry Engle

Offering Counters: Mary Makley & Martha Yoder

**April 23 In Sanctuary, Communion**

Pastor Mike Kemper

Acolyte: Levi Griffin

Elder: Jolene Griffin

Trustee: Mike Johnson

Safety Person: Diane Griffin

Offering Counters: Jerry Engle & Carlotta Willard

**April 30- In Sanctuary Communion**

Pastor Becky Ebb-Speese

Acolyte: Kole Hokanson

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Martha Ydoer

Safety Person: Ken Heise

Offering Counters: Doug Mackenzie & Mike Johnson