**ZION’S MESSENGER**

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

**President, Paul Meade, Emergency Phone: 616-340-7305**

**ADVENT HOPE AND EXPECTATIONS**

What are your best hopes for this Advent and Christmas season?

Imagine that its Epiphany (January 6), and you are reflecting on all that happened up till then… what would have you expected to happen? What will it take on your part to make it all happen? Where did you expect to meet Jesus in this season? Where did God come to meet you in your daily life?

At the heart of Christmas is the simple truth that God comes to meet us in Jesus Christ, and in coming into our lives, saves us from sin and death by reconciling us to God. At the heart of Advent is the expectation of Jesus' coming ... and our watchful, hopeful, waiting for his appearing. So, as you use your imagination to reflect on this season from the yet unwritten future story of your life, consider how God is preparing your now to meet Jesus in the days and weeks ahead. Expect to meet Jesus. Keep awake and alert for signs of God's kingdom. Keep faith in God's presence in all situations. Keep hope that God brings good out of evil. At the same time, though, expect to be surprised by the unexpectedness of the meeting…

We may discover by January 6 that our best hopes for the season failed to come about. We may fail to do the stuff we want to do, and we may find ourselves doing things we never anticipated doing. We may discover that everything that could go wrong did go wrong. And yet, if we enter this season open to God's will and movement in our lives -- like Mary and Joseph and John and Isaiah -- we may also discover on January 6, that God came into our lives in the most amazing, unexpected and life-changing ways.

After all, maybe our best hopes for this season have nothing to do with decorations or presents or even family gatherings, but instead our prayers are answered when by God's grace, love and mercy we find that God's kingdom has come among us, and God's will has been done for us, as well as in and through us.

We have a lot planned at Zion in the next month: worship, Sunday school, activities, Children’s Program, and more. It is our prayer for you, that God uses each item on our calendar to strengthen your faith and deepen your love for God. Invite your friends to join you. After all, you never know how God might work through your kindness and compassion to answer your neighbors' prayers and fulfilling their best hopes for this month.

Adapted from St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church, 445 Old Post Road, NJ, Pastor Jim, 2016

**ADVENT DEVOTIONS**

This year instead of purchasing devotion books, we are asking members to start a new tradition. Beginning December 1st, read one chapter of the book of Luke in the Bible each evening. There are 24 chapters. On Christmas Eve you will have read an entire account of Jesus’ Life and wake up Christmas morning knowing WHO and WHY we celebrate.



**CHRISTMAS EVE**

**WORSHIP SERVICE**

Christmas Eve falls on Sunday this year and we are planning one worship service for this special day. We will have our traditional Christmas Eve Candlelight Service at 7 pm on December 24th. Pastor Polly Standley will lead the Christmas Eve worship service. There will be no morning Sunday School or worship service.

**NEW MODEL CONSTITUTION**

The council would like to adopt the new model constitution from the synod. It is in electronic format. This will be on the agenda for the annual meeting where it will be discussed. It will then be on the agenda in July for adoption.

**NOMINATIONS FOR COUNCIL, BOARDS, AND COMMITTEES**

The Nominations Committee has started work to fill council, board and committee positions for 2024-25. If you feel called to help with a specific board/committee or to serve on Council, please contact any member of the Nominations Committee to discuss current needs. Also, please prayerfully consider whether you can continue to serve or where you are being called to serve. Nominations Committee members are: Wayne Hazel, Tom Krikke, Mary Makley, and Martha Yoder.

**ZION’S FREE CHRISTMAS TREE FARM AND MARKET**

The Third Annual free Christmas ministry was a huge success again this year. We gave out well over 100 trees to people in need. Thank you to everyone who donated, helped bring things up from the basement, helped with set up, working during the event, and cleanup. It was a tremendous project, and I know our efforts were very appreciated by many people. God bless you all for your caring hearts!



**SOCK COLLECTION- LAKEWOOD COMMUNITY COUNCIL**

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who donated new socks for the Lakewood Community Council Christmas baskets. Buffy Meyers, Treasurer, asked that we collect socks, especially for adults to include in the baskets. Zion’s generosity came through in true form - you donated a total of 524 pairs of socks including more than 340 for men, nearly 150 for women, and 39 for boys and girls. There was also one hat donated. There will be a lot of happy warm feet thanks to your caring hearts!

**COMMUNITY DINNERS**

**AT CENTRAL CHURCH**

Zion’s last day to serve the Thursday evening dinners this year at Central Church in Lake Odessa was November 30th. We are reassessing to see if this ministry is one that we wish to continue in 2024. If you volunteer to work or provide desserts for this ministry, please let Martha know if you are interested in continuing next year. There are currently seven churches participating so Zion’s turn comes every seventh week.

**ZLCW UPDATE**

The ZLCW want to thank the women and girls of our church who helped with our special Thankoffering service. We received $460.00. These donations are greatly appreciated. This money will be sent to the main office of the Women of the ELCA to help with their many projects. Also, a special thank you to Chloe Makley for being our speaker. She was in Thailand one year doing missionary work.

The ZLCW also want to let everyone know that we have purchased a new commercial refrigerator. It was purchased from D. L. Walker, Inc. in Lansing. Two men delivered it on Tuesday, November 7th. The cost was $2,990.00 plus $50.00 to remove the blue protective film for a total cost of $3,040.00. A special thank you to Dawn and Phil Brodbeck for their generous donation of $1,000.00 given in memory of Dawn's parents, Robert and Phyllis Baes. Also, thank you to the men involved with removing our old refrigerator from our church and hauling it to Hastings to be recycled. It sure is helpful to have a refrigerator in our kitchen again.

**LAKEWOOD COMMUNITY COUNCIL CHRISTMAS PROJECT 2023**

Here is information about the annual Christmas Basket project, sponsored by the Lakewood Community Council. Some suggestions for how to help:

* Pray for this ministry
* Send monetary contributions to cover meat certificates and other purchases
* Send contributions of any size hat, warm winter mittens/gloves, and socks
* Children’s gifts for 14 children

A Thrivent Action Grant has been granted for $250 and will be used to purchase the children’s gifts and some socks, hats, and gloves/mittens.

The schedule is as follows:

* Tuesday, December 12 from 9 AM-noon: receive and organize food from Feeding America. Set up tables and make up boxes.
* Wednesday, December 13 from 9 AM-noon: Distribute food into boxes.

\*If needed, 6 PM-9 PM: Finish packing food into boxes.

* Thursday, December 14 from 9 AM-noon: Pack letters, meat certificates, seal boxes, number boxes, and tape information to side of boxes.
* Friday, December 15 from 9 AM-noon: Match up gift bags with boxes, sort boxes into communities, set up for distribution.
* Saturday, December 16 from 9 AM-noon: Deliver boxes to families.

Questions should be directed to Claude Smith.

**SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER**

**December 3- In Sanctuary, Communion**

Pastor Frank Rothfuss

Acolyte: Kole Hokanson

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Mike Johnson

Offering Counters: Mary Makley & Martha Yoder

**December 10-In Sanctuary, Communion**

Pastor Jim Morgan

Acolyte: Lexi Griffin

Elder: Buffy Meyers

Trustee: Martha Yoder

Offering Counters: Diane Griffin & Carlotta Willard

**December 17- In Sanctuary, No Communion**

Children’s Christmas Program

Acolyte: Levi Griffin

Elder: Jolene Griffin

Trustee: Jerry Engle

Offering Counters: Jerry Engle

& Carlotta Willard

**December 24 Christmas Eve Service**

**7 PM ONLY**

**-In Sanctuary, Communion**

Pastor Polly Standley

Acolyte: Kole Hokanson

Elder: Dan Utterback

Trustee: Mike Johnson

Offering Counters: Doug Mackenzie & Mike Johnson

**December 31- In Sanctuary, Communion**

Pastor Mike Kemper

Acolyte: Lexi Griffin

Elder: Buffy Meyers

Trustee: Martha Yoder

Offering Counters: Mary Makley & Martha Yoder