

# January 2006 Newsletter

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## 175 !!

Thank you, thank you, and thank you again! We did it, and then some. The process began earlier this year with a congregational workshop in February. From there it was a series of cottage meetings, first in the homes of members, and then here at the church. We created a membership covenant and then an action plan. At the top of our list of things to do was to make sure that our attendance at worship bore witness to our resolve to grow healthier and stronger. We were determined to see to it that worship attendance held steady at 170. That meant that we would have to improve our efforts in 2005. When the cottage meetings began, our average attendance at worship was a tad over 160. We knew we could do better; and your efforts went well beyond our expectations. Average attendance from September through December was well over 190! Our average weekend worship attendance for the year was 175.

This figure represents a pattern of Good News. It is a pattern in the sense that we seem to have found some strength at the 170 level, and are now beginning to move above that level. That means stability and growth. This is Good News because we are beginning to see signs of strength confirmed in other important areas of our congregational life. The number of families connecting the dots between Sunday School and worship is increasing. The support for the ministry of Christian education and youth is strengthening. We were bold in laying out healthy growth in our budget; we kept our targets in sight, and exceeded them. Yes, "175" represents a pattern of Good News. The journey is just beginning; but 2005 seems to have seen Zion turn the corner in looking ahead to a healthy future. We've only just begun to sense the possibilities; but with your commitment and God's guidance, we can hope to continue our pattern of Good News.

We have seen some changes at Zion. Our worship services offer more variety. We have found success in the formation of our Children's Choir. As of the first of the year, we have hired a new Church Office Secretary (and we describe Diane Dunphy in greater detail on page 11). We have tried to become more consistent in the nursery care that we offer on Sunday mornings. What is more, we look forward to adding some staffing in the area of youth ministry. Zion has a long and proud history of great ministry here in North Canton. We know that our future can reclaim the momentum that has moved us forward for one-hundred-and-ninety-two years. I ask only that we invest our hearts in the tenets of our membership covenant, that we keep our action plan clearly in view, and that we remain committed to growing in love and service by grace.

In His service, and yours, Pastor Sherwindt

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## DIANE DUNPHY

### **INTRODUCING OUR CHURCH OFFICE SECRETARY: DIANE DUNPHY**

Ninety-nine applicants and seven interviews later, Diane Dunphy became our choice for the position of Church Office Secretary here at Zion. She begins with the arrival of the New Year. The Search Committee was very much impressed with her maturity, professionalism.

experience, and, of course, her personality. There is no doubt that all will enjoy meeting her and working with her. We appreciate the interim service that Helen Alex and Carol Rossbach have offered; and, with them, we offer our thanks to God that we are ready to begin a new chapter in our ministry of service with yet one more piece of the staffing puzzle in place. In terms of family and personal history, Diane and her husband Mike are the parents of three grown children, Brian (age 27), Katie (age 25), and Bill (age 20). Their children are graduates from area high schools, Brian and Katie from Green, Bill from Hoban. Brian is married and lives in Florida. Katie is in the midst of planning a wedding. So, Diane will be a bit distracted through May of this year! Bill is a second year student at Kent State University. Mike and Diane make their home on the northeast edge of Canton, right at the border where Lake meets Plain Township. Diane is very active at St. Paul's Catholic Church here in North Canton. Her community commitments have included leadership responsibilities with the Green Middle School PTA, volunteer work with the St. Vincent DePaul Society, with interests in decorative painting as well as master gardening.

Professionally speaking, Diane has a long and impressive working relationship with the Ohio State University Extension program in Stark and Summit Counties. In particular, she has assisted in managing the office that offers a Certified Master Gardening program to community residents, along with a host of services related to the Ohio State University Extension's horticulture education, which have included involvement in such events as the Akron Home & Garden Show. Her responsibilities have included just about all phases of what office staff must do - sowing the seeds of good will and hospitality that go with greeting and meeting with the public, all sorts of clerical and organizational work, a good bit of desktop publishing, designing brochures, creating informational pamphlets, writing articles for newsletters, organizing mailings, and filling in the gaps that make for an effective program. For eleven years, Diane helped the Extension Program to run like a well-oiled machine. Re-organization decisions at the state level made her available to Zion. Again, we were honored by her interest, happy with the interview, and we know that we will be blessed with the working relationship that we are now beginning. I hope that all will take the opportunity to get to know Diane in the coming weeks and months; and, don't forget, share you name with Diane more than once. It takes a while to match names with faces and voices. Perhaps one of the first projects that will test Diane's organizational skills can be that picture directory we've been talking about for a couple of years now. Hey, that sounds like a great idea! Let's get to work on that right now. Welcome to Zion, Diane. We look forward to a very productive relationship. Many at Zion have been a part of the conversation process that led to Diane's selection and hiring. We extend our thanks to Carol Rossbach, Nick Lanzalotta, Laura Thompson, Suzanne Walters, Flo Jensen, Carolyn Elsass, Jayne Schrader, and Pastor Sherwindt.

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## **Giving Thanks**

**GIVING THANKS FOR THE GREAT EFFORT OFFERED BY SO MANY - FOR THE DECORATIONS, INSIDE AND OUT:** Chris Thomas and Gary Horton made the manger scene look easy with their know-how and craftsmanship. Thanks for a great placement, and for the effective lighting. Darlene Milavickas and Jeff Frank had a large part to play in the wreaths in the front of the sanctuary. Then, Chris Thomas came along, and, with a little help from Betty Tracy and Edna Smith, added a touch we haven't seen for quite a few years, the poinsettia trees on either side of the stained glass window. Now, that looked truly beautiful. We'd like to thank our many friends and members who added the color of close to fifty poinsettias, completing the effect of a picture-perfect Christmas.

Of course, let's not forget the Youth of Zion, headed up by Debbie Fox, with help from nieces, Taylor and Brooke Roman. along with sons, Nathan and Jeremv. in putting up our Giving

Trees, one in the Narthex and another in Luther Hall. These trees displayed some really striking tags that offered gift suggestions from more than a few families, and these tags inspired Zion's members to purchase almost seventy-five gifts for folks whose Christmas was made much more joyful because of this generous outpouring of Christian love. We'd like to thank the many persons who had a hand in this project, along with the Youth of Zion and their many adult advisers who helped with the wrapping and deliveries: Lisa Roman (with Taylor and Brooke), Lisa Kay (with Laura), Melanie Whalen (with Emily and Erica), Susan Whalen (with Sarah and Kaleigh), Connie Frank (with Carley and Cassie), Julie McCartt (and Ian), Cheryl Roman, Renee Schrader, Lisa and Kayle Frock, Karen Kirk, Shirley Cavender, the Hendersons....

**FOR OUR SUNDAY EVENING ADVENT PROGRAMS:** This year's Sunday evenings in Advent were well spent and well supported at Zion. Average attendance was remarkable ... over 90, imagine that! We would like to thank the women of the Chancel Guild for hosting our dinner on the First Sunday in Advent. Thanks, too, to Carol Rossbach for creating another beautiful design for our Advent wreaths, and to Pastor Sherwindt for organizing the second edition of our Daily Devotional Guide for Advent. We thank the Church Council for hosting the dinner for our Second Sunday in Advent. Special thanks to Dale Jacobs, Darlene Milavickas, Roberta Rownd, and Sue Everhart for their leadership in the kitchen. The evening service was spectacular, thanks to Shirley Horton, Carole Singer, Dale Jacobs, Marilyn Espe-Sherwindt, Beth Heller, Suzanne Walters, Darlene Milavickas, Zion's Senior Choir, the Instruments of Christ (from St. Paul's), and John Myers (also from St. Paul's).

The Third Sunday in Advent saw the return of Chrismons - Christmas tree decorations designed by Lutherans in Virginia, short for CHRIST MONograms. The Youth of Zion, their parents and adult leaders, provided a delicious dinner, and Carol Rossbach, with help from Debbie Fox, came up with a great design for everyone to make their own Chrismon. It was a very enjoyable evening, with great participation on the part of our youth and young families. Once again, there were too many persons to thank individually; but the initiative taken by our leaders in finding ways to involve our youth in joy of the season really paid off with our Children's Christmas Program the very next Sunday. (You'll read more about the kids and their performance of their Christmas Play, Twas the Night Before, on page 6 in this newsletter.)

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## **MORE THANKS**

**MORE THANKS** for the **GREAT EFFORT** offered by **SO MANY** It is very difficult to relay a sense of the sheer number of volunteers who helped us accomplish so much during the Christmas season. Without our small (and larger) groups we could never have made as much of the holiday season as your help made possible. We have listed the four groups that hosted our Sunday Evening Advent Dinners: the Chancel Guild on November 27, the Church Council (with others) on December 4, the Youth of Zion on December 11, and Zion's Senior Choir on December 18. Once again, our thanks to all!

**Chancel Guild == Church Council == Youth of Zion == Senior Choir**

All of these groups are open to receiving as many new members as are interested in being a part of what we do. Even the Church Council extends the net far and wide to include any and all members who want to help oversee the growth of the church. Another group that should receive an honorable mention for all that they do to assist in the life of the congregation is the **MEN OF ZION**. While all of Zion's men are a part of the Men of Zion, we'd like to mention the following men for the faithfulness they've shown in joining in the fellowship we host in Luther Hall on the third Wednesday of each month: Chris Thomas, Gary Horton, Lorin Beaber, Steve Ross, Larry Moore, Chuck Danner, Garry Leed, Dave Bower, Chuck Heller, Fred Elsass, Todd Elsass. Mike Babich. Verle Elsass. Bob Lancashire. Bob Kail. Dale Jacobs. Wayne Slease.

**Pastor Sherwindt, with a good number of others attending as schedules permit.  
We would like to thank everyone who lent a hand in helping Zion to enjoy a Merry Christmas with the Spirit of Christ alive among us!**

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## **ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL**

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## **UPCOMING EVENTS**

**- MARK YOUR CALENDARS!**

**Sunday, January 29: Zion's Children's Choir will sing at our 10:30 a.m. Sunday Service**

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## **CHILDREN'S CHOIR**

**Sunday, January 29: Children sing at 10:30 a.m. service**

**Sunday, February 26: Children sing at 10:30 a.m. service**

**Sunday, May 14, Mother's Day: Sing at 10:30 a.m. service**

**Sunday, June 18, Father's Day: Sing at 10:30 a.m. service**

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## **TWAS THE NIGHT BEFORE . . .**

**What a great story and great performance by Zion's Sunday School children this year! We had a lot of fun watching the Christmas story unfold as our two readers told the story, and our wonderful characters brought the story to life. We would like to thank the children for their hard work and commitment, and the parents for all of their support. We truly enjoy your working with your children during these programs and throughout the year. A special thank you goes to Ethan Frock for taking over the part for one child who was sick on the day of the program. We truly appreciate Ethan's willingness to help as well as the great performance he gave! We would also like to thank everyone who helped make this year's Christmas Program such a great success! Thank you to Lisa Roman for her tireless play directing and sewing of costumes. Thank you to Mary Humbert for sewing such great, new shepherd costumes. Thank you to Carol Rossbach for the beautiful props and scenery. Thank you to Lisa Frock, Ann Lemmo, Connie & Melissa Riffle, Renee Schrader, Janet Slease and Courlene Coulter for all of their support and help wherever they were needed during practices, the program, and our Christmas party. Thank you to Taylor Roman and Laura Kay for all of their help with the dress rehearsal, the Christmas party, and the program, and thank you to Suzanne Walters for the musical accompaniment. Everyone's time, dedication and commitment to our kids is so greatly appreciated! Thank You! Thank You! Thank you to everyone involved!**

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## **GREAT NEWS**

**GREAT NEWS FROM (AND FOR) ZION'S YOUTH**

**YOUTH ADVENT SERVICE:** Thank you to the youth and their families for a great dinner and an enjoyable Christmon Service on Sunday evening of December 11th. The food was great, the service was beautiful, and everyone enjoyed making their own, beautiful Chrismon. We extend a special thank you to Carol Rossbach for leading us in making our ornaments.

**ZION'S GIVING TREE:** We would also like to extend many heartfelt thank you's for everyone's support of the Giving Tree this year. We were able to share the joy and love of Christmas with four families and several individuals, thanks to the generosity of so many in your willingness to give gifts to others in need. Many people were able to have a merrier Christmas and to experience God's love through the wonderful, giving hearts of Zion's family. This project was a great success and a true picture of what the Christmas Season is about! Thank you again to everyone for all of your support for this project!

**THE BIBLE BOWL:** Practice begins this month. Anyone interested in joining Zion's team should see Wayne Slease or Todd Elsass for the details. Persons in grades 6 through 12 are eligible to participate. The Bible Bowl competition takes place in February. This year, the team will be studying the Book of Exodus. Zion has fielded teams in the Bible Bowl for years, with a history of taking home the trophy from time to time. This is a great event and a great way for Zion's youth to come together and learn about God's Word while having a lot of fun! Here are the Top Ten reasons why our kids should get involved in the Bible Bowl: it is a great way to make the bible exciting and fun; youth will actually learn and remember scripture; it's a great way to rally your entire church around the youth; kids love it; leaders increase their own biblical knowledge; it helps to keep youth Christ-centered; it provides great humor for years to come; it challenges youth who have always been a part of the church to get more involved; you may actually catch a youth reading the bible when they are not being told to; the Bible Bowl is a great way to teach your youth to love scripture.

**THE WINTER GATHERING:** Zion's Youth will meet at the church on Friday, January 6th, at 4:30 p.m., so that we can leave by 5:30 p.m., and arrive at the Holiday Inn in Independence in time for registration at 6:30 p.m. We'll have pizza at the church, and will try to answer any last minute questions that parents might have. This will be a great time for all who make the trip. This year's theme is Choose Christ. The gathering will focus on how "choices" in our lives make a difference and how God intends for the Scriptures to help us with the choices we make. David Shearer and Rachel Kurtz are the invited speakers for the weekend. Zion has five adults and thirteen youth planning to attend. We're hoping that they'll return from the weekend in time to share their story at our family service on Sunday, January 8th.

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## **CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS**

Since there was no meeting in December, it's hard to praise the Council for perfect attendance; however, Council did host our evening with St. Paul's Catholic Church on December 4th, when we gathered for great fellowship, great food, a great crowd, and a great service. Our Service of Lessons & Carols featured Zion's Senior Choir, the Instruments for Christ from St. Paul's, a tuba accompaniment of our hymns, and many of our fine voices at Zion. The dinner, both the swiss steak and the chicken, was, well, pure delight. While Dale and Darlene took the lead in the kitchen, Council was there in force, with (almost) perfect attendance - another great show of teamwork and mutual support. (For the record, 150 were present, about 80 from Zion and 70 from St. Paul's. As an aside, we never want to be outnumbered by our guests. I am convinced that if even more of us gave these Advent services a chance, you'd be surprised by how enjoyable these evenings are, and how worthwhile the time spent focusing on the reason for the season can be ... and is ... especially these joint services that we hold with our ecumenical partners at St. Paul's.

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## **NURSERY NEWS, AND MORE**

Many have noticed that Valerie Cizek has been doing a great job in the nursery since October. Valerie is a student at Stark State, employed part-time at Hollister's in Belden Village, and, in her spare time, serves at the Nursery Care Attendant during our Family Service on Sunday mornings. We have recognized the need to offer nursery care during the Sunday School hour, especially since Chuck Danner has begun to work with some of our younger parents and singles in talking about creating more options in our adult education program. We thank Valerie for agreeing to add the Sunday School hour to her nursery care duties.

That's right. You heard correctly. Chuck Danner has been meeting with quite a few members on Sunday mornings in December to talk about forming a new adult class. As you may recall, one of the outcomes of our cottage meetings was the recognition of the need for an additional adult class. We met three times in December with discussions centering on class purpose, class topics and teaching methods.

We have a core group of twelve people who have agreed to support the class. Our initial session confirmed that the class will primarily be aimed at young couples but will also be open to all adults. Suggested topics and materials range from issues such as parenting and current events to Lutheran doctrine. Although informality, open discussion, and spontaneity will be valued, the importance of sound bible-based Lutheran theology and a degree of structure was recognized. Group members have offered to serve as leaders and teachers. Please join us at our next session, which is set for 9:15 a.m. on Sunday, January 8th.

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## **THE MEN OF ZION**

The Men of Zion gathered for a very nice evening on Wednesday, December 21. We discovered that we needed a new delivery system for getting the "luminary" project off the ground, or should I say, on the ground. Several men stepped forward to light a fire under the Men of Zion, but forecasts of rain dampened our enthusiasm in getting this project together for this year. One great tradition at a time: this year it was the poinsettia trees to inspire our worship in the church; next year, luminaries to proclaim the light of the world!

The Men of Zion will meet for dinner on January 11th, at 6:00 p.m. in Luther Hall.

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## **JANUARY SENIOR BIRTHDAYS**

1/11/2006 Verle Elsass

1/20/2006 Mary Corbett

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## **ANNIVERSARIES IN JANUARY**

1/2/2006 Robert and Johanna Henderson

1/13/2006 Verle and Ruth Elsass

[We have once again entered a period of Church Office transition. As many of you know, it is always difficult to keep track of newsletter records from one secretary to the next. Facts change from year to year, and one person's sense of filing may differ from another's. If you would like your birthday or anniversary listed in The Zion Herald, please remind the Church Office of

that important preference (330-499-3909). Now that the Zion Connection is beginning to make some connections, we will become much more effective in keeping track of those important facts that will make us a healthier and more vibrant congregation.]

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## **THE WOMEN OF ZION**

**THE CHANCEL GUILD CHRISTMAS DINNER** was outstanding. The food was delicious, and the fellowship, truly outstanding. What a great way to celebrate another good year of service at Zion. We were all blessed with the words that Helen Heller offered as we prepared to sit down for dinner. The first reading was a prayer for the family: "Lord, thank You for this special day when we bow our heads in thanksgiving and consider our many blessings. We thank You for our health and our homes, and the beauty all around us. We thank You for answering our prayers, and for knowing what we need even before we ask. Most of all, we thank You for surrounding us with the gifts of family and friends - for their laughter, trust and love. Please bless those who can't be with us, yet remain close to our hearts, and continue to bless and protect us. This is our loving prayer to You on this special day."

Helen then offered a table prayer, which all of us appreciated and many of us wanted to remember. Heavenly Father, we thank you for the food before us, the family and friends beside us, the love between us, and your presence among us. Amen

The monthly **WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY** will meet on Tuesday, January 17, at 9:30 a.m. We continue our focus on Acting Boldly with the fruit of the Spirit. **KINDNESS** is the fruit of the month. Have you ever given "the shirt off your back" to a stranger? That is what God calls us to do.

The poor widow of Zarephath only had enough meal and oil to feed her son and herself, yet she gave her last cake to Elijah. When we demonstrate kindness to strangers, we are truly acting as Christ commanded.

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## **TEACHER IN THE SPOTLIGHT**

January's Sunday School Teacher Spotlight is on Janet Slease, who teaches our 1st & 2nd grade class. Janet has been a member at Zion for 30 years. In addition to Sunday School, she has also helped with the youth group, the Bible Bowl, and served on the Fellowship Committee. Janet is married to Wayne, and they will celebrate their 30th Anniversary in May. They have 2 children, Melanie (a senior at Capital University) and Matt (a senior at Glenoak), and their cat, Hobie. Janet has been teaching our 1st & 2nd or 3rd & 4th grade classes for the last 10 years! Her favorite part of teaching is seeing the children's excitement when they learn new things, and how they love to participate in the Christmas and Easter Programs. She also loves to see the children grow and change through the years. During the week, Janet is a secretary at Babcock & Wilcox Research Center in Alliance, where she recently celebrated 30 years of service. She spends her spare time devoted to her kids' extra curricular activities, helping out wherever she is needed. Janet finds it especially fun to help with the Glenoak Band, chaperoning for all of the marching band functions, including band camp. She has also helped with fundraising activities for the Canton Youth Symphony, where both Matt and Melanie have been members. Janet's favorite food is pizza. She loves to watch the old TV shows on TV Land, especially her favorite, I Love Lucy. Her favorite movie is You've Got Mail. She also enjoys listening to the oldies on the radio, and her favorite songs include anything by the Beatles, the Beach Boys or the Bee Gees. Janet is an invaluable member of Zion's Sunday School staff, and we would like to thank her for all of her great work and dedication!

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## **THANK YOU'S TO ZION**

**A great big THANK YOU goes out to all of our volunteers who helped serve the many families who depend on Zion Food Pantry for some much needed help. This month, we offered more than food. Several of these families received Christmas gifts from our Giving Tree, and many received the household items and paper goods that we were collecting in the Narthex - paper towels, toilet paper, soaps of all sorts, and so much more. From the Food Pantry Crew, our Clothing Closet organizers, the Youth of Zion, and the entire congregation: Thank you for caring, and thank you for helping.**

**Thank You's Leftover from Thanksgiving: Dear Church friends, Thank you for your thoughtful gifts of turkey, potatoes, and pies. We had a delicious feast and a relaxing day. We are thankful for the love of Christ that shines through you. Sincerely, Rick, Jason, Keith and Joe The guys next door (and Staff)**

**Dear Zion Lutheran, Thank you so much for the turkeys and dinner foods. Several individuals had a wonderful Thanksgiving because of you! Tammy, Martha, Peggy, Florence, Bob, and Darla Thank you for your generous gifts of Thanksgiving Dinners to Siffrin, Inc. Your support provided many of the people we serve with a wonderful Holiday. Bradley L. Vincent Executive Director**

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