

January 2007 Newsletter

A WORD FROM OUR PASTOR

Dear members and friends of Zion,

The year began with some serious snow-plowing expenses, together with utility bills that were simply out of this world! We took these shocks in stride, and gradually turned 2006 into a year of phenomenal growth. A very busy December combined service to others with generosity here at home to cap off a wonderful year. We thank God - and you - for a great year of growing in love and service by grace. New members, more than a few baptisms, new restrooms, a new sound system, great children's programs, a delicious pig roast, along with delicious Lenten and Advent dinners, with attendance at worship increasing, and a budget that found its way into the black with the last weekend of the year: these are just a few of the high points that signaled Zion's growth in 2006.

It is difficult to know where to begin. So, let's recount the good news we enjoyed in receiving a good number of new members. Six celebrations of baptism included Benjamin Sir Louis, Avery Kitzmiller, Holden Nist, along with Rachel, Anthony and Joshua Keaveny. Three of our members were confirmed this past Pentecost: Laura Kay, Taylor Roman, and Chase Weinman. Our other new members included Bobbi Lesser, Mike & Tina Linz, Jim & Elaine Fidler, Bill & Joy Benton, the Milek family (Brian & Nicole, Lya, Kathryn, Weston and soon-to-be-baptized Amelia), the Rhodes family (John & Ginny, Max, Maddie, Mallory and Marcus), Shannon McNamara (with daughters Hanna and soon-to-be-baptized Grace), Mason & Jennifer Brown, Mark & Marie Keaveny, and the Frank family (Jeff & Connie, Carley and Cassi). Zion's family is growing in leaps and bounds: thanks be to God!

It was also very gratifying to experience such wonderful generosity throughout the fourth quarter, and during December, in particular. We had a great November, with special collections for the Women of the ELCA and our own Food Pantry leading the way. In December, the Advent Giving Tree generated an overwhelming response, which only makes our support of the Operating Budget all the more impressive. We had close to \$3,000 to make up, which we did, with more than a little to spare! We also increased our giving for the new sound system to just under \$20,000. Benevolence, the sound system, our own outreach ministries, and the operating budget: we showed great strength in all areas: thanks be to God ... and to you!

The Children's Christmas Play, our Advent (and Lenten) dinners, Dr. Lester Mohler's visit, our Congregational Pig Roast, Vacation Bible School, the New Orleans Mission Trip, the Mother's Day Breakfast, the Children's Easter Program, the Steel Drum Band Ice Cream Social, another St. Patrick's Day Party hosted by our Elderberries, the renovation of the restrooms: these are just some of the highlights from 2006. It's been quite year for Zion: thanks be to God ... and to you!

Of course, not all the news in 2006 was what we would have wished. More than a few of our best friends were called home to heaven; and, while we rejoice in the promises of God's never ending love, the underside of a deep and abiding love is the sense of loss that cannot be refilled or replaced, only endured. We do not grieve as those who have no hope, but we do grieve, and we do feel love's loss. We commend to God's unfailing faithfulness members of Zion's church family whom we love (and will surely miss) - Ron Hartman, Jack Taylor, Chuck Heller, Eddie John, and Harold Scott. May God be praised, for His gracious love and mercy endures forever! In His service, and yours,
Pastor Sherwindt

A QUICK LOOK AT THE YEAR IN REVIEW

January 2006: Utility bills, snow plowing and winter salting; we wrap up our renovation work on the restrooms, with incredible participation (Task Force members Brian Walters, Darlene Milavickas, and Marilyn Espe-Sherwindt; Lorin Beaber, Dave Bower, Chuck Danner, Pete Fenney, Dean Fox, Scott Gross, Tim Himebaugh, Gary Horton, Mary Humbert, Flo Jensen, Bob Lancashire, Nick Lanzalotta, Lou Milavickas, Dave Palumbo, Carol Rossbach, Adam Schrader, Jayne Schrader, Renee Schrader, Ron Singer, Chris Thomas, Mark Votaw, Kevin Walters, and Dean Yoder); we say goodbye to Ron Hartman.

February 2006: Zion's new pictorial directory begins its long journey to completion, which we are still awaiting; the Youth of Zion prepare for Bible Bowl competition with Todd Cizek as team captain, and team members Corey Beaber, Becca Coulter, Laura Kay, and Taylor Roman, with some perfect and near-perfect scores adding up to a superior rating!

March 2006: Ash Wednesday arrives early, with five Sunday evening Lenten dinners and dramas receiving very strong support, with average attendance at these evening events approaching 100; we welcome the Franks as new members; the Men of Zion fare well in the first Annual Chili Cook-off; the Elderberries return for St. Patrick's Day.

April 2006: Holy Week and Easter at Zion feature some great choral anthems, moving worship services, and a great Children's Easter program; we welcome the Keavenys as new members with baptisms of Joshua, Anthony, and Rachel at our Easter Vigil; over 200 members and friends come out to enjoy *Sounds of the Caribbean*, our Steel Drum Band Ice Cream Social.

May 2006: The Men of Zion host another fabulous edition of the Mother's Day Breakfast; we welcome Holden Edward Nist through Holy Baptism; we celebrate Confirmation with Laura Kay, Taylor Roman, and Chase Weinman ... twice; photo sessions begin for our pictorial directory; our telephone campaign for the new sound system proves highly successful; we welcome the Mileks as new members.

June 2006: Our New Orleans Mission Trip opens eyes, transforms lives, and is just great fun (as well as serious work) for Mark Votaw, Jon Votaw, Chase Weinman, Bob Lancashire, Corey Beaber, Steve, Linda, Matt and Nicki Ross, Michele Cohen, Karen Kirk, and Pastor Sherwindt; the Northeastern Ohio Synod Assembly presents Pastor Sherwindt (among others) with a plaque commemorating the 25th Anniversary of his Ordination; we add new deacons (Rob Frock, Jim Dansizen, Howard Dansizen), trustees (John Brokloff, Beth Shaheen, Mark Votaw), and a Council member (Mary Humbert) to our leadership team.

July 2006: *Son Treasure Adventure*, this year's Vacation Bible School theme, is a great success, with 84 children registered, average attendance of 80, an unbelievable number of volunteers, and five wonderful days focused on God's love as giving, kind, caring, forgiving and forever; VBS offerings, along with matching funds from Thrivent, support the animal shelter locally, the Make-a-Wish Foundation with the Children's Hospital of Akron, along with our own Food Pantry; we say goodbye to Jack Taylor.

August 2006: The Youth of Zion enjoy a great day of fun in the heat of Cedar Point; we wrap up another highly successful season for our North Canton Ministerial Association Coed Softball League; we welcome Jim & Elaine Fidler, Mason & Jennifer Brown, the Rhodes family, and Shannon McNamara & Hanna as new members; we celebrate the baptism of Avery Valentina Kitzmiller.

September 2006: The Men of Zion host our Hawaiian Luau & Pig Roast, which features a new draw, Dunk the Pastor for Good (along with Debbie & Dean Fox, Lorin Beaber, Steve Ross, and Mark Votaw), raising over \$4,300 for our Food & Clothing ministries here at Zion and Operation Blessing at the Adullam Christian Fellowship in New Orleans; we enjoy another great start for Sunday School with Rally Day: the Youth of Zion enjoy a great day boating at

West Branch State Park; we say goodbye to Chuck Heller.

October 2006: The Youth Missions Craft Show is another great success, with German dinners, Sunday School gift baskets, our bake sale and concession stand, along with lots of great crafts; the Women of the Church lift up Blanket Sunday, which takes in 92 comforters and blankets, along with 56 health kits and 56 school kits; our annual Communion Is for Kids class combines with our Healthy Membership class to create some good momentum and great support for Christian Education at Zion; we say good-bye to Eddie John.

November 2006: Our Food Pantry helps over 350 persons to enjoy Thanksgiving; Dr. Lester Mohler returns to his home church at Zion with a great presentation and program featuring his world-renown humanitarian work with Operation Smile; the Women of Zion enjoy a generous Thankoffering Sunday; we dedicate the new sound system; we welcome Mike & Tina Linz as new members, and celebrate the baptism of Benjamin James Sir Louis.

December 2006: Advent Services average 100 in attendance at our two Sunday evening editions; the Advent Giving Tree elicits a huge response from Zion's members; the Children's Christmas Play is terrific; the Sanctuary is beautiful with seasonal banners, our poinsettia trees, two giant wreaths, and Christmons everywhere; the Chancel Guild continues their delicious Christmas dinner tradition; the Men of Zion start their own, with roast beef & Yorkshire pudding; we welcome Bobbi Lesser as a new member; we say goodbye to Harold Scott.

A WORD FROM OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR - SUZANNE WALTERS

What a month ... what a season ... what a night! December has been a busy, bustling, blessed time of the year. Advent has brought opportunities for food, fellowship, and fun. Christmas Eve is always a night to remember, and Zion's music ministry has been involved every step of the way. The first four Sundays in December comprised the four Sundays of Advent, and each was marked with golden opportunities for Zion's musical groups to participate in and enrich the various services that were offered. On December 3rd, the first Sunday in Advent, the choir sang a beautiful anthem called Advent Prayer. The Praise Team sang three anthems later that evening at St. Paul's Catholic Church for our ecumenical Advent service, which followed a delicious dinner prepared for us by our friends around the corner.

The second Sunday in Advent had the choir singing *Light of the World*, a Suzanne Walters favorite! The evening Advent service that night began with a delicious dinner prepared by the Chancel Guild, and was followed by a service led by Carole Singer. We sang carols from around the world, and even accompanied ourselves with instruments from around the world, thanks to Carole Singer's personal collection. It was truly a fun and enjoyable experience. On the third Sunday, December 17th, the Senior Choir sang *The Holy Child Will Come*, a lovely and energetic piece. The children presented an outstanding performance of *On Our Way to Bethlehem* at the 10:30 a.m. service to a full congregation. Children standing and singing about their love for Jesus - it's what creates lasting memories. The evening service that night was phenomenal in attendance -120 people came to make Christmons, eat pasta prepared by the Men of Zion, and enjoy a great youth service celebrating the story of Jesus through Christmons.

Then, Christmas Eve: the fourth Sunday in Advent, the silent night remembering the birth of the Christ child. Three evening services, each having its own unique character and format. The early service, tailored toward families with children, included two touching video presentations and a reading of *The Crippled Lamb*. The children sang *Sing We All Noel*, a lovely anthem that incorporates *The First Noel*. It was a beautiful service.

The 8:30 p.m. service began with thirty minutes of special music, and included the traditional

service led by the organ and choir. Two special anthems, *Do You Hear What I Hear* and *Once Upon a Christmas Night*, were offered during the service, and the candlelight singing of *Silent Night* was the finishing touch: beautiful, just beautiful. The 10:30 p.m. service was similar to the 8:30 p.m. service, but led vocally by the Praise Team. Their anthems during this late service captured the mood of the evening perfectly - *Peace, Peace, Peace* and *Cradle Carol*.

Again, what a month ... what a season ... what a night.

January is chock-full of musical opportunities too. Be ready to be approached by some choir members wearing their recruiting hats. I have charged them with the task of growing the choir. When one of them approaches you to join this important ministry, it is my hope and prayer that you will consider saying *yes*. You will not regret it!

GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

Upcoming Events - Mark your calendars!

Sunday, December 31: Group Sunday School Activity, Pre-K thru 6th after Choir Practice

Sunday, January 7: Sunday School resumes normal classes and normal schedule

Sunday, January 28: Zion's Children's Choir sings at 10:30 a.m. Family Service

Zion's Children's Choir continues

The Children's Choir practices each Sunday from 9:10 a.m. to 9:30 a.m. before Sunday School.

Their schedule for singing through the program year is as follows:

Sunday, January 28th, Epiphany 4 - at the 10:30 a.m. Family Service

Sunday, February 25th, Lent 1 - at the 10:30 a.m. Family Service

Sunday, May 13th, Mother's Day, at the 10:30 a.m. Family Service

Sunday, June 10th, Pentecost 2 - at the 10:30 a.m. Family Service

OUR CHRISTMAS MUSICAL: ON OUR WAY TO BETHLEHEM

What an awesome performance by Zion's Sunday School children this year! We had a lot of fun watching the kids sing and tell the beautiful story of the first Christmas. It was truly a wonderful journey as they went on their way to Bethlehem! 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 children and working with them during these programs and throughout the year. The entire group did an outstanding job! We extend a special thank you to Tommy Lewis for holding the special star that led us to Bethlehem!

We would also like to thank everyone who helped make this year's Christmas Program such a great success! Thank you to Suzanne Walters for directing and leading all of the beautiful music. Thank you to Tina Beaber, Lisa Frock, Annie Lemmo, Connie 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 Karen Kirk for making the great animal costumes - the cows, sheep, hen, rooster and donkey looked truly adorable. Thank you to the members of our Catechism class who took on roles to help fill the parts, and thank you to the members of our high school class and the Praise Team for back up vocals. Everyone's time, dedication and commitment to our kids is so greatly appreciated! Again, thank you. Thank you to everyone involved!

MORE GOOD NEWS FOR THE YOUTH OF ZION

OUR ADVENT GIVING TREE

Thank you to the youth for a great job during the Advent Christmon Service on December 17. It was a beautiful service. and everyone enjoyed making their own beautiful Christmon. We

extend a heartfelt thank you to Carol Rossbach for leading us through the craft time following our delicious dinner, so graciously hosted and served by the Men of Zion.

We would also like to extend many thanks to everyone in the congregational family for your overwhelming and generous support of our Giving Tree. We were able to share the joy and love of Christmas with several families and individuals because of your gifts. Many were able to have a merrier Christmas and experience God's love through the wonderful, giving hearts of their friends at Zion. Thank you to Taylor & Brooke Roman, Laura Kay and Nathan & Jeremy Fox for helping Debbie and Dean Fox to put up the Giving Tree, along with hanging the tags. Finally, thank you to everyone who helped wrap the gifts so they could be delivered to the families on time. This list includes Renee Schrader, Annie & Adam Lemmo, Cindy Young, Tommy & Emily Lewis, Hannah Rybkoski, Laura Kay, Taylor & Brooke Roman, Cheryl Roman, Eric & Justin Dague, Natalie & Christian Henderson, Brooke & Brandon Stout, and Brandon's friend, Zach, Nathan & Jeremy Fox, Jaret Beaber, and Connie, Carley & Cassie Frank. This project was a wonderful success and a great experience for all the youth - and all the adults - involved. Thank you, again, to everyone for all of your support for this project!

CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

Our December meeting got off to a late start due to the good news that many of our members were enjoying the Chancel Guild Christmas Dinner (Carol Rossbach, Mary Humbert, Betty Tracy, Pastor Sherwindt). Otherwise, attendance was great, with Laura Thompson, Jayne Schrader, Dave Palumbo, Renee Schrader, Cindy Ferry, Sharon Stout, Lorin Beaber, and Steve Ross.

The Treasurer's Report showed a month with better than average giving, a little progress in whittling away at the actual operating budget deficit, and encouraging signs of overall budget discipline. What the November Report did not show is how generous the congregation would be in December. Giving for local benevolence carried over from our Thanksgiving Food Pantry support to our Advent Giving Tree; substantial gifts continued to add to our new sound system support; overall giving would turn our pesky deficit into a year-end surplus, with room to spare! Excluding over \$3,000 in Giving Tree support, excluding as well over \$1,000 in Sound System support, our support for ordinary Operating Budget expenses soared above the \$28,000 level, which is well above the \$18,500 we need every month to meet ordinary expenses!

In addition to great giving, we also enjoyed great attendance during the final quarter of the year, especially in December. Sunday Evening Advent Programs, the Children's Christmas Play, the Fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve: average weekly attendance at worship grew from 175 in 2005 to 182 in 2006. That shows great commitment. Mostly, it confirms that we are moving in the right direction. Thanks be to God, and to you, for helping to make us healthier and stronger

STEWARDSHIP EDUCATION

Since we've had some success in reaching the financial targets we set for 2006, we thought that 2007 would be a great time to reinforce these successes with some stewardship education. It's a program called Walking with Jesus, and focuses more on what we're called to commit to Jesus in living than what we pledge to the church in our giving. It's a program that will help us in our journey through Lent to Easter.

Next month's edition of *The Zion Herald* will kick-off a month of articles, mailings, temple talks, sermons, and follow-up phone calling that will invite us to walk, listen, and give with

Christ-centered commitment. It isn't about what the church needs, but what we need to grow in faith, to grow in service, to grow in joy. Jesus has come that we might have true life in abundance. *Walking with Jesus* is how we find our way to the true life Jesus proclaims, offers, and gives.

So, look for more information about a new way to think about living and giving in Christ as we join the Wise Men on their journey through Epiphany, as they traveled far to worship the Lord and offer their gifts.

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

The *Men of Zion* enjoyed an unbelievably delicious sampling of prime rib, Yorkshire pudding, with all the extras at our December meeting. We were joined by visitors from Lutheran Men in Mission, and we now look forward to hosting the Chili Cookoff here at Zion this year. Our next meeting is *Wednes-day, January 3rd*, when we will meet for dinner at 6:00 p.m. in Luther Hall. The *Women of Zion* invite you to join them for their *Monthly Bible Study* in Luther Hall on *January 16th at 9:30 a.m.* We will continue our series of lessons that focus on the presence of God in suffering. January's discussion will take a look at some questions. Can we tell God we're disappointed when things are not going well? Is it okay to complain to God in prayer? Can we even be mad at God? Can we tell God how we feel? Let's face it, God can take it. He invites it! All women are also invited to join in the fellowship that *Zion's Comfort Givers* enjoy on the 2nd & 4th Thursdays in Luther Hall.

Reflections or Epiphanies: "I had a dream that I was going somewhere very important, changing my life, leaving everything behind. I was told I could bring two treasures with me, just two. What did I take? I chose laughter and music." [Joan Oliver Goldsmith, *How Can We Keep from Singing*]

Martin Luther once said, "Since it is God's nature to make something out of nothing, we must become as nothing before God can make something of us." Adelaide Pollard, a 20th century poet made the same point with his hymn *Have Thine Own Way*: "Have thine own way, Lord! Have thine own way! Thou art the potter, I am the clay. Mold me and make be after thy will, while I am waiting, yielded and still."

CHURCH FAMILY NEWS

Dear Zion Friends,

Thank you for your cards, prayers, and visits on behalf of Ed during his hospitalization.

A special thank you to Pastor Sherwindt for his prayers and many visits. His support helped sustain us during the long four months and final days. Thank you again, and may God bless you all.

The Eddie John Family

Dear Pastor Sherwindt, and Zion Friends,

Thank you for the lovely gift basket. What a surprise! I could tell it was put together with much thought. We have been enjoying the lasagna, French bread, salad fixings, mixed nuts, local candies, and Christmas cookies.

We're also very thankful for the way we've been received into the church. Everyone has been so kind and made us feel welcome. We're glad to be a part of the church family.

Yours in Christ,

The Milek family

(Brian & Nikki, Lya, Kat, Wes, and Amelia)

We'd like to thank everyone who contributed to the colorful beauty of our sanctuary for the celebration of Christmas, especially those who purchased poinsettias for our poinsettia tree, and, of course, those who helped put them on display and care for them with love.

JANUARY SENIOR BIRTHDAYS



Happy Birthday to:

Verel Elsass

January 11

Mary Crobett

January 20

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

Happy Anniversary to:

Robert & Johanna Henderson

January 2

Verel & Ruth Elsass

January 13

In Loving Memory of HAROLD SCOTT

In Loving Memory of Harold Scott

October 5, 1917-December 2, 2006

[The Service of Christian Burial, December 6, 2006]

Let there be no mistake about it, we've got a lot to be thankful for as we gather here at this Service of Christian Burial. Harold lived a long and full life, with a loving family, lots of friends, fond memories, pretty good health, not much suffering, or lingering at the end. God was good to Harold in life, and God was good to Harold in death. Blessed be the Name of the Lord. That's not to say that life was perfect or that death was welcome. According to the Bible, death is the final enemy to be overcome by Christ's power and placed under his Lordship. That's what our reading from 1st Corinthians 15:26 was saying: "The last enemy to be destroyed is death."

That is the cosmic scope of things, the long ending to the story of our salvation. Jesus gets a whole lot more personal when he describes it. Our reading from the Gospel of John tells us that the thief comes only to steal and to kill. Jesus, on the other hand, has come that we might have life in all of its abundance. That's who the Good Shepherd is, and that's what the Good Shepherd does. He lays down his own life so that his sheep might live, safe from all foes, and ultimately, safe from the final foe itself, safe from death. That doesn't mean we won't die; but it does mean, as Paul tells us in Romans 8, that nothing in this world, not even, death, will ever be able to separate us from the life-giving embrace of God's love, which is ours in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This is the Good News that lines our sadness with hope. We have hope because of the future God has promised Harold. We have hope because God's faithfulness is sure. God keeps his promises here in this life, and certainly beyond this life in the kingdom of heaven. When it comes to faithful-ness, Harold knew what it meant to keep his promises. He kept his promise to Viola for over sixty years - to have and to hold, for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, 'til death do us part.... Harold knew what it meant to keep his promises - to Viola, to his children (and theirs), to those whom he owed an honest day's work, to friends in the neighborhood, even on the golf course, where honoring the game and our partners in a friendly foursome brings out the best in folks we know and like. Harold was an easy man to like. He was good-natured and easy-going. He had a smile and a good word for everyone he knew, and this applied to everyone he met, since he never met a stranger. There was a lot of good in Harold, because there was a lot of God in him.....

It's true, as you have come to know, we are never prepared for that unexpected moment when God's call comes, and we are taken home to heaven. We're sometimes shocked by the sadness that accompanies our feelings of loss. We know that Jesus was right in the Gospel of John when he said, "The thief comes only to steal," because that is what death does: it rips loved ones from our embrace, leaving our hearts torn and our lives empty. "I have come to give you life," Jesus says, "that you may be filled with life in abundance!" That's God's promise, and our hope. It's a promise we've come to trust because we know that God is faithful and keeps His Word. It's a hope whose fulfillment we have tasted in part through the love and life we've been blessed to enjoy on earth.

"Let not your hearts be troubled," Jesus tells us. "You believe in God. Believe also in me." In my Father's house there are many rooms, and what's more, we're thinking about adding on. So, we'll probably need some builders like Harold to help us with our expansion! Harold's work isn't done; it's just beginning.... This is going to be a different holiday season, a little bittersweet, to be sure. But let the joy of the season remind you of the Good News that your Dad is in a better place, with people he loves, looking forward to the heavenly reunion that awaits us all in Jesus' name. Amen
