

A WORD FROM THE PASTOR

I asked eight of our former Presidents at Zion to reflect on the significance of our reaching our 195th birthday as we shared some cake and coffee between the services on Christ the King Sunday. I have served eight congregations in three synods over the course of my thirty years in parish ministry, and I must admit that not many congregations – in the ELCA, or any other denomination, for that matter – reach their 195th birthday. It is a rare and special occasion for Zion to reach this milestone; and yet, when you look around this small section of northeast Ohio from Canton to Massillon, you find that we are not alone. There are ten of us in the ELCA north of 175 and heading toward 200. If 150 years is the measure, then there are fifteen of us.

Some of those congregations have consolidated with others, like St. John and Grace, who formed Advent in Uniontown thirty years ago. Three have just merged to form a new Canton City Lutheran Parish: First, Trinity, and Bethel. Another of our downtown Canton congregations recently closed (Martin Luther Lutheran Church). Zion shares a common history with two local congregations, Holy Trinity on 55th and Zion United Church of Christ on Main Street. Zion and Holy Trinity shared the same itinerant missionary founder, Pastor John Stough, whose work between 1806 and 1814 led to our founding, and to the call of our first regular Pastor, Anton Weaver, who served Zion for twelve years, although it was his successor, Pastor J.J. Fast, whose presence would be felt for generations, since he served Zion for thirty years, from 1827 to 1857. We also share a common history with Zion (Evangelical and Reformed) United Church of Christ. We shared the famous little log church in what is now North Canton Cemetery, and remained under the same roof until they moved to Main Street. We eventually moved to West Maple in 1904, and then to Lindy Lane in 1960.

One of the saddest discoveries I have learned through the experience of thirty years of ministry, for a pastor whose great passion has been cultivating my skills as a theologian, has had to do with my increasing appreciation for the wisdom of realtors in assessing the prospects of church growth. Early on, I naively thought that it was all about trusting God's guidance, following the Spirit's lead, and growing in Christ, individually and together. But in the 1980s, Lutherans agreed that the key to growth was the triune formulation of location, location, location! And in this regard, Zion has surely been blessed with a good location that has only gotten better over the years, decades, and centuries. Northeast Ohio really was "the heart of it all" when it came to westward expansion during the early 19th century; and, as it turned out, this originally rural area north of Canton has become a stable, attractive, and thriving suburb in the 20th century. Oddly enough, easy access to I-77 has only improved our location in the city of North Canton.

It's hard to say why we are still going strong after 195 years. Some of this is due to the good luck of a great location. But even a great location wouldn't have helped us if we weren't able to offer excellence in ministry and a faithful track record in growing in love and service by grace. John Long was right on the mark in sharing that we didn't reach this milestone by accident. Many persons made hard decisions over the years, and many more backed those decisions with generosity in giving and faithful support. In the end, it really is about who we are and whose we are. For we have been called by a faithful God, and blessed with generations of faithful people, who have been willing to offer our all to the mission God has entrusted to us ... in Jesus' name.

A BIRTHDAY IN THE FAMILY: ZION TURNS 195!

We enjoyed cake and coffee, with punch, and some great punch-lines offered by Zion's past Presidents during a Special Birthday Party Program between the services in Luther Hall on the Sunday of November 22, which was the Festival of Christ the King Sunday. While it is true that we were formed on June 14 in 1814, during the past five years we have used the last Sunday of the church year as our time for marking important moments in our congregational life. So, we invited Blair Woodside, Jr., Chuck Danner, John Long, Carolyn Elsass, Darlene Milavickas, Laura Thompson, Carol Rossbach, and Jim Fidler to share birthday greetings with us, along with any other wit and wisdom that came to mind.

Blair began with a sense of history, his narrative of personal service at Zion, and some funny references to Pastor Ruth, *the Colonel*, as he was known, but never to his face! Blair recounted his family's move from Martin Luther Lutheran Church, his boys' enrollment in Catechism class, his becoming a Trustee, then the Treasurer, and Council President from 1969 to 1973. The kitchen was moved, the offices added, along with an education wing, and then Memorial Hall. Merrill Tucker, a saint in heaven, had an advocate in Dale Jacobs, who spoke of his late father-in-law lovingly, both personally as a son, and as a fellow member who appreciated all that Merrill Tucker, and Merrill's good friend Chuck Heller, did in serving their Lord through involvement here at Zion. Another Chuck, by the name of Charlie Danner, then spoke about changes to the church, which were more spiritual than physical. Zion became more open with communion, better at welcoming persons who were different from us, and friendlier, too.

That set the stage for a rousing account of change at Zion offered by Carolyn Elsass. Carolyn spoke of her late husband Fred as the longer-term member of the two, a member for 80 years, rather than her 45 years! Of even greater interest was her battling to pull Zion into the 20th century by amending the constitution to allow women to serve as elected officers of the church. The role of *the Colonel* was alluded to, without being formally mentioned, as she described the long and winding path to organizational equality she helped to initiate. While Carolyn wasn't the first woman to serve as President, she was one of five consecutive women to serve in that capacity at Zion. Darlene Milavickas, who has served in just about every office imaginable, more than once, made it clear that women were among Zion's most active and faithful leaders.

Laura Thompson spoke about the pride of returning to her grandparents' church and making it her own. Of course, there were references to her uncles, the three Reiss boys who became Lutheran Pastors, and to her Dad, their brother, who didn't. Carol Rossbach spoke beautifully about being fully engaged as a member at Zion, even without the requisite three generations of memories that so many enjoyed. In a sense, Carol witnessed to the new growth that is required of all congregational families if they are going to make it to their 195th birthday. Jim Fidler was appreciative of this inclusive openness, since he had been a member not much longer than a year before finding himself working with the HV/AC Task Force, then serving as Vice-President of Council, and, without knowing how it actually happened, becoming President. As another non-practicing attorney with Carolyn, Jim noted that her trail-blazing was so successful that he was (and is) the first man to serve as President in sixteen years! All in all, it was a great day, a wonderful morning of worship, with a program that was enjoyed by all. May God be praised!

ZION'S ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

The First Sunday in Advent: Gathering as Families Welcome the New Year

- Sunday, November 29, 8:00 a.m.: Our Traditional Service, with the Senior Choir singing
- Sunday, November 29, 10:30 a.m.: Our Blended Service, led by Zion's Praise Team
- Sunday, November 29, 5:30 p.m.: Our First Advent Dinner hosted by the Men of Zion
- Sunday, November 29, 6:00 p.m.: Let's Begin Right, unveiling our Advent Giving Tree
- Sunday, November 29, 6:15 p.m.: *An Advent Drama: Jesus and the Gift of Communion*

[The First Sunday Evening Advent Service welcomes the arrival of the New Year with a focus on the gift of Jesus to the world. Jim Fidler offers a dramatic rendering of Jesus' gift of himself with a drama entitled *Remember Me*. Plan to join us. You'll be glad you did, and so will we.]

The Second Sunday in Advent: A Traditional Service of Lessons & Carols

- Sunday, December 6, 8:00 a.m.: Our Traditional Service, with the Senior Choir singing
- Sunday, December 6, 10:30 a.m.: Our Blended Service, led by Zion's Praise Team
- Sunday, December 6, 5:10 p.m.: Our Second Advent Dinner hosted by Church Council
- Sunday, December 6, 5:55 p.m.: Our Traditional Service of *Lessons & Carols* at Zion

[Our evening program features the many talents that Zion possesses with our Choir, the Praise Team, vocal ensembles, and the Men of Zion. Join us for an Evening with Lessons & Carols.]

The Third Sunday in Advent: Gathering as Families around Chrismons

- Sunday, December 13, 8:00 a.m.: Our Traditional Service, with the Senior Choir singing
- Sunday, December 13, 10:30 a.m.: Children's Christmas Program, *The Story of Christmas*
- Sunday, December 13, 5:30 p.m.: Our Third Advent Dinner hosted by our Youth Leaders
- Sunday, December 13, 6:15 p.m.: *Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Prince of Peace*

[The Children's Program during the 10:30 a.m. Service will tell the story of Christ's coming through chrismons. All who join us will enjoy the program, and the gift of a chrismon, too!]

The Fourth Sunday in Advent: Singing Carols from around the World

- Sunday, December 20, 8:00 a.m.: Our Traditional Service, with the Senior Choir singing
- Sunday, December 20, 10:30 a.m.: Our Blended Service, led by Zion's Praise Team
- Sunday, December 20, 5:30 p.m.: Our Fourth Advent Dinner hosted by the Chancel Guild
- Sunday, December 20, 6:15 p.m.: Celebrating *Christmas Carols from around the World!*

Our Christmas Eve Schedule at Zion: Two Services, 6:00 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

Wednesday, December 24, 6:00 p.m.: Our Family-Friendly Service, with special music by the children of Zion, Mr. Walters' story-time, plus our Carol Setting for Holy Communion
Wednesday, December 24, 8:00 p.m.: Special Music offered by our many talented members
Wednesday, December 24, 8:30 p.m.: Our Traditional Candle-Light Service, with Zion's Senior Choir singing, as well as our special Christmas Carol Setting for Holy Communion

CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

Jim Fidler, who had to miss our October meeting due to scheduling difficulties, was happy to call our November meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. We're a little short-handed, with two vacant seats to fill (Witness Ministry and Caring Ministry); but attendance was still strong, with Jim Fidler, Jayne Schrader, Dave Palumbo, Linda Lancashire, Chris Thomas, Tina Beaver, Mark Votaw, Dale Jacobs, and Pastor Sherwindt present. The meeting was brief, but filled with celebration, both of the smooth passage of our 2010 Budget at the Congregational Meeting and of the October Treasurer's Report offered by Dave Palumbo.

The *Treasurer's Report* for October displayed very impressive figures for overall income, and some good news about income relative to expenses. In addition to receiving \$5,779.00 in net income from the Craft Show, \$645.00 for the HV/AC, and \$1,095.00 in Memorials, income for the Operating Budget exceeded expenses by \$2,314.60, leaving us with a year-to-date deficit of just (\$1,295.55). There is no doubt that a strong finish to the end of the year will move us out of the red and into the black, setting the stage for a strong start in 2010. With five Sundays in November, five major services in December, and your help, we can end the year with a flourish.

ZION'S OCTOBER FINANCIAL FACTS

October Income	\$18,456.12
October Expenses	<u>\$16,141.52</u>
October Surplus	\$ 2,314.60
Income thru October	\$205,223.82
Expenses " October	<u>\$206,519.37</u>
Deficit thru October	(\$ 1,295.55)
Our 2009 YTD (Deficit)	(\$ 1,295.55)
<i>The 2008 YTD (Deficit)</i>	<i>(\$ 752.69)</i>

We thank you for your generous support!

\$TEWARDSHIP NEWS

The month of November has just barely ended, but we can already tell that we are well on our way to accomplishing our two main goals with the 2009 Operating Budget: (1) meeting its target with income that matches expenses; and (2) exceeding our targets to create a surplus that gives us the breathing room we need to hire a Church Office Secretary. It's always nice to enter December with a year-to-date surplus, rather than scrambling to avoid a year-end deficit.

We ended October with a year-to-date deficit of (\$1,295.55). In November, expenses were right in line with expectations, while offerings were very generous. It is both gratifying and humbling to know that our members will rise to the challenge and give what is needed, once those needs are fully described, with details that are convincing, and goals that are compelling. We're quite proud of the fact that we carried a running surplus of \$7,609.95 into this year. Our offerings in November provided income that exceeded expenses by such a comfortable margin that we have turned our \$1,295.55 deficit in a \$4,134.17 year-to-date surplus heading into December! Our goal is within reach. If we can sustain this trend, and build on it, we'll have all the confirmation we need to return to the level of support staff we have historically enjoyed.

The good news is that 2009 is shaping up to be another in a series of very generous years for Zion. Support for the Operating Budget is the final link in a chain of faithful giving that has included such things as supporting the Food Pantry (\$6,264.23), honoring pledges for the HV/AC system (\$15,575), with extra giving for Vacation Bible School, as well as keeping current with the Steve Dague Fund. It all adds up to **one big thank you** for your generous support for the work of our church.

GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Saturday, December 12: The Children's Program Dress Rehearsal and Pizza Party, 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, December 12: Older Youth meet for an Advent Giving Tree Gift Wrapping Party

Sunday, December 13: The Children's Christmas Program – at the 10:30 a.m. Service only

Sunday, December 13: Youth of Zion and their families host our Advent dinner at 5:30 p.m.

Thursday, December 24: Sunday School Children sings at the 6:00 p.m. Christmas Eve Service

PRE-K THROUGH THE SIXTH GRADE

This December, we are doing things a little differently than in past years. The kids will continue to have Children's Choir practice at 9:10 a.m., with regular Sunday School lessons at 9:30 a.m. throughout the month. We will have a Christmas Program; but practice and rehearsal will be done outside of Sunday School. There will be many parts for this year's program, which will center around *Telling the Story of Christ through Chrismons*. We will see beautiful symbols, hear wonderful scripture, and sing everyone's favorite Christmas songs. We hope to involve all of our youth, including those in Catechism and High School, with many different roles. We look forward to a great program along with the great lessons they will continue to learn during the Sunday School Hour.



This year's Christmas Program will be performed at the 10:30 a.m. service on Sunday, December 13th. We will have a Dress Rehearsal and our traditional Christmas Pizza Party, which will be followed by our annual wrapping of the Giving Tree gifts on the morning of Saturday, December 12th, starting at 10:00 a.m. We hope to be finished around 1:30 p.m.

A FEW WORDS OF THANKS TO OUR YOUTH AT ZION

Thank you to all of our youth for the great job they did decorating this year's Thanksgiving bags for the Siffrin House recipients of our *Great Turkey Give-away*! The youth from ages 3 to 18 decorated thirty-two grocery bags for this project, and then helped to fill those bags on Sunday, November 15th! We had a great service event that day with food, fun, and fellowship, along with a lot of hard work! When all was said and done, Zion's Food Pantry gave away more than ninety-two turkeys with all the trimmings to area families in need.

A big thank you also goes out to all of the pantry and youth leaders for their help as well! We would also like to thank the kids who brought in some greatly needed food items that day, and the High School class for their cash donation to help purchase turkeys. We are very proud of our youth for their wonderful service!

MORE GREAT NEWS FOR ZION'S YOUTH

CHRISTMAS IS A SEASON OF GIVING

The Youth will again sponsor our Advent Giving Tree as we help several families in our community prepare for the Christmas season. The Giving Tree, which is located in the Narthex, has tags with gift suggestions for these families. We are also hoping to help *all* of the families we serve through our Food Pantry by giving them Christmas dinner. So we have placed tags on the tree for a \$25 donation for Christmas dinners in addition to the gift tags. Please take a tag (or more, if you like), and purchase the item. Then bring the gift – *unwrapped with the tag attached* – to church by Friday December 11th. The older youth will be getting together on Saturday, December 12th, at Noon, after our Christmas Program rehearsal, to have pizza and wrap the Giving Tree gifts so they can be delivered to the families before Christmas day. Please help our youth to help these families have a Merry Christmas and feel God's love through the caring that this great service project embodies and inspires.

We also want to collect cookies again this year to help both the families we serve through our Food Pantry and our shut-ins at Zion enjoy Christmas. We are asking each family to bake 2 to 4 dozen cookies to share with these families. There are about 60 families that we serve through our Food Pantry on a regular basis; and we are hoping to collect 120 dozen cookies. Yes, that's right: one thousand, four hundred, and forty cookies! So, we'll need your help. There will be a sign-up sheet available in Luther Hall, or, if it's easier, just contact Debbie Fox if you are willing to bake for this project. We will need these cookies by the weekend of December 12th and 13th in order to distribute our cookies to the pantry families on Tuesday, December 15th. It would be great to have them by Saturday, December 12th, so we can start packaging them while the youth are wrapping the Giving Tree gifts. This will be another great way to share the love and joy of the Christmas Season!

Thank you for all your support! The Zion family is a truly wonderful family of loving and giving people. This especially rings true during the Holiday Season, and we are so grateful for all that everyone does!

MORE GREAT NEWS FOR ZION'S OLDER YOUTH

Advent has arrived along with our wonderful Advent dinners and services. On the evening of Sunday, December 13th, the youth will host the Advent dinner and service. We are planning a pasta dinner, finished off with lots of great desserts. We will be contacting the youth and their families about donating items for dinner, helping to set-up, serve, clean-up for that dinner. This is always a great dinner and we appreciate everyone's help to make it happen!



**Zion's Sunday School Staff would like to wish all of
our families a very Merry Christmas and a
Peaceful and Happy New Year!**



ZION'S FOOD PANTRY IN THE SPOTLIGHT

It has taken me nine years to finally realize that I am not in control. With that thought-provoking realization, our *Great Turkey Give-away for Thanksgiving* went very smoothly. We had 115 homemade pies, which were donated by friends of the North Canton Newcomers Club, and by the restaurant *Cheese and Crackers*; the women of *Curves* at the corner of Easton and Market Street collected and donated oodles of spuds; and you, our church family at Zion, donated stuffing, turkeys, and monetary donations exceeding \$1,000.00! Even the Youth of Zion got into the spirit. We have the kids and their leaders to thank for the awesome brown bags decorated in a Thanksgiving motif; and let's not forget their enthusiastic help in filling the decorated bags which were designed for the Siffrin Group Homes.

On Monday, November 16th, a small crew from the Food Pantry packed four vehicles with 34 turkeys, 34 bags of potatoes, 34 beautifully decorated and full grocery bags, and 34 pies. We personally delivered the 32 Thanksgiving meals to the offices of the Siffrin Group Homes, and Thanksgiving meals both to the parsonage group home and the Dick and Bruce Findlay's group home. The next day, Tuesday, November 17th, the entire Food Pantry Crew assembled and cheerfully handed out the 60 remaining dinners. We worked together like a well-oiled machine. We were a pit crew that would have given any NASCAR team a run for their money. Thank you to everyone for exceptional support.

FYI: New hunger statistical results from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service reports that 1.5 million Ohioans are food insecure. The less politically correct way to say it is that "people are hungry in Ohio." Please remember that hunger is not seasonal; it is non-discriminatory, and it happens all year.

To finish on a lighter note: Weeks before the turkey dinner distribution, it seemed like I was always taking frozen turkeys for a ride. (They may not be able to fly, but they sure do enjoy a good car ride.) They went from the store into my car and into my freezer at home, and then into the pantry freezers, by means of my husband's car. On Food Pantry day I knew I had purchased 4 small turkey breasts for single households, but could only find 3. I thought maybe someone might have given the missing turkey breast away. Since we run a tight ship, I thought that it was highly unlikely that I would be missing one of my turkeys. As the day went on the missing turkey breast became less and less important, and by the end of the day, I never gave it another thought. Ten days later the missing turkey reappeared. Can you guess where I found it? Well, we found the very aromatic, defrosted turkey breast wedged under the seat of my husband's car! *Febreze* is now our last line of defense for eradicating the rotting smell from the car!

On an even lighter note, I was also doing so well on my time this year that the girls and I decided to attend the Thanksgiving Eve Community Service at Faith Methodist Church. Mind you, I said *Thanksgiving Eve*. We pulled into a dark, empty parking lot on the Wednesday before Thanksgiving. Bewildered, we took another look at the article in the *November Herald*. There we saw that the "Community Thanksgiving Service" had been moved to Tuesday night [mostly for convenience]! Laughing, and with tears running down our faces, and decided to do some early Christmas shopping instead. [Pastor told me that the church was full, the preaching excellent, and the offering, supporting the Stark County Hunger Task Force, was very generous.]

God Bless, Shirley Cavender

THE WOMEN OF ZION

The date for the *Chancel Guild Christmas Dinner* is set for Tuesday, **December 8**. Our hostesses this year are Helen Heller and Kay Davis. The cost is \$ 11.00 per person. The evening's Social Hour begins at 5:30 p.m., with dinner served at 6:00 p.m. While the menu will contain some surprises, we are sure that everything will be delicious, and that everyone who joins us will have a great time. Please let Helen Heller know of your desire to join us by Monday, November 30.

An Important Chancel Guild Reminder: YWCA shelter items are due by Friday, **December 18**. We are looking for sauce pans, small skillets, oven-proof dishes and baking pans, microwave bowls, boxed meals, canned meats and tuna, peanut butter and jelly, fruits of all sorts. Please place these items in our Sewing Closet in Luther Hall anytime.

Following a successful collection of quilts, blankets, school kits, and health kits on Blanket Sunday, *Zion's Comfort Givers* are back at it, with plans to meet on the second Thursday in Luther Hall at 9:30 a.m. The conversation is lively, the work fun, and the good we do makes a lasting difference for families all over the world. You are invited to join us anytime; but if you choose the morning of **December 10th** in Luther Hall, you'll find us – Kay Davis, Helen Edwards, Ruth Elsass, Susan Geib, Joyce Gibeaut, Helen Heller, Betty Lenz, Juanita Meighan, Carol Snyder, Edna Smith, Pat Stayer, Betty Tracy, and Linda Wilson – sewing in Luther Hall.

Please help fill the Sanctuary with the colors of Christmas by purchasing your *Christmas poinsettias*. The cost is \$9.00 per plant, and we will need plenty to fill out our poinsettia trees. Orders need to be in by December 20th.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY

As we begin the season of Advent, many of us may find ourselves wrestling with contrasting feelings. There's a sense of eager anticipation and looking forward to the Feast of the Nativity and all that it means. But that anticipation is often mixed with feelings of anxiety. How will everything get done? Why has this lovely season of the church year become so overloaded with activities and expectations? Most of us aspire to find a balance. We long for peace, as we look forward to the One who promises new life, hope, forgiveness, and salvation. If these words describe you, then you will want to join the women of Zion for our *monthly Bible study*, which meets in Luther Hall on the 3rd Tuesday, **December 15**, at 9:30 a.m.

We continue our study of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. We focus on the promise of new life through our Baptism into Christ. Romans 6:13 invites us to "present ourselves to God as instruments of righteousness." We can offer ourselves in God's service because our Lord offered Himself for us on the Cross, living a love that is so powerful that we are free from fear of God's judgment, free from the power of sin, free from the burden of holy obligations, free even from the curse of death.

It all flows from the waters of Baptism, when the love of God and the gift of the Spirit flowed into our hearts and lives through the friendship and fellowship we enjoy in the life of the church. Baptism is not a private act, but a communal miracle, when the soil of our life together enriches the seed of faith planted in our hearts so that we may grow in grace and blossom with a rich harvest of good works, which glorify God and build up the church.

Join us for an engaging study of Romans. You'll be glad you did, and so will we. That's December 15, at 9:30 a.m., in Luther Hall.

MEN OF ZION NEWS

Our regular meeting on the first Wednesday in November began with a delicious lasagna dish, served up nicely by Gary Horton and Chris Thomas. We talked about the great success of the Craft Show in October, a November Outdoor Clean-up Day, and the first Advent Dinner at the end of the month. As Head Trustee, Chris Thomas took the lead in planning the Clean-up Day, and as Head Chef, Dale Jacobs began to plan for the first Advent Dinner, set for November 29.

Our Clean-up Day, which culminated with an all-morning affair on Saturday, November 21, was a great success. We had lots of help as we cleared the landscaping beds, the grounds, and the roof of leaves and debris. There were also a number of spots inside that required some attention. We extend our thanks to John Brokloff, Randy Cizek, Verle & Ruth Elsass, Carl Geib, Audrey Hartman, Cathy Harvey, Mary Humbert, Garry Leed, Bob Lancashire, Dave Palumbo, Seth Roan, Carol Rossbach, Adam Schrader, Gail Vogt, Faye Shankle, Chris Thomas, and Brian Walters.

Finally, we hail the first Advent dinner as a huge success. We had great leadership in the kitchen with Randy Cizek (roast pork), Dale Jacobs (mac 'n cheese), and Mark Votaw (baked beans). We enjoyed lots of help with drinks, desserts, and everything else – John Brokloff, Nick Cignetti, Chuck Danner, Steve Dague, Howard Dansizen, Jim Fidler, Dean Fox, Carl Geib, Brian Kay, John Long, Garry Leed, Bob Lancashire, Brian Milek, Larry Moore, Doug Roman, Steve Ross, Pastor Sherwindt, Ron Singer, Dick Smith, Chris Thomas, and Brian Walters. The Advent service featured a drama by Jim Fidler, which was nothing short of sensational! All in all, it was a great evening, with great food, great attendance, and a great devotional drama, too.

GIVING THANKS FOR ZION

Dear Zion Congregation,

“Has anyone ever told you what a wonderful family you are? I hope so! I hope you’ve been told dozens of times ... because you are just amazing. And just in case you haven’t heard those words in a while, I want you to hear them now. You deserve that.

“It takes someone special to do what you do. It takes someone rare and remarkable to make the lives of everyone around them nice, brighter, and more beautiful. It takes someone who has a big heart and a caring soul. It takes someone who’s living proof of how precious a person can be. It takes someone just like you.”

Thank you all for the great send off. The warmth and caring that attracted us to Zion only grew during our time there. Leaving our church family was hard, and selling the house and moving has been stressful. I can’t help but wonder what is in store for us. But we’re in good hands and we’ll just wait and see.

Linda and two dogs, a cat, and a fish are living with her brother and sister-in-law. They have been so understanding and helpful. They really are a blessing and it is great having Linda only an hour-and-a-half away. We’re still house shopping in the Poughkeepsie area.

We’re not sure when we’ll next be back in North Canton, but we’ll see you in church when we do. We miss you terribly. Thank you for all your prayers and good wishes.

*Love to all,
Steve and Linda Ross*

(A job change for Steve from the Timken Company to Schatz Bearing Company led to the Rosses’ move to Poughkeepsie. While it has been difficult to see them move, we were surely blessed with their presence, and are happy for their good fortune in landing well.)

MORE THANKS FOR ZION

Dear Zion Congregation,

“Good people will be remembered as a blessing.” (Proverbs 10:7) As Thanksgiving comes again, the celebration would not be complete without telling you how much you mean and what a blessings you are. Thank you for the support you have provided.

*Many thanks,
Mrs. Jessie Zarlingo*

Dear Chancel Guild,

Thank you for calling and delivering the beautiful Chancel flowers to me for my husband at Manor Care.

The flowers are beautiful and brighten the room with love. We thank you so much for thinking of us. God bless you.

*Sincerely,
Barb & Don Achauer*

Dear Members of Zion,

Thank you so much for allowing us to borrow sixteen tables for our craft show in October. It was greatly appreciated!

We hope that your craft show was also very successful. Again, thank you for being a kind and generous neighbor. In Christ’s love,

*Renee Kessler,
Development Director,
St. Paul's Catholic Church*

Dear Zion Lutheran Church Family,

Thanks so much for the gift of money you gave us. We really appreciated it. Thanks for your continued support and blessings for our marriage.

*Our deepest thanks,
Rhonda and Adam Schrader
(Newlyweds as of 7/25/2009)*

AND STILL MORE THANKS

To Our Friends at Zion Lutheran Church,

“Give thanks to the Lord for He is good; His love endures forever.” (1 Chronicles 16:34)

Thank you for always being so kind. The guys appreciate it in their own way, and so do we.

Michael, staff

Thank you for your kindness.

Janet, staff

Thanks so much. Happy Thanksgiving!

Kristy, staff

Thanks for caring so much, and for your generosity.

Pam, staff

May the rich and choicest blessings fall upon your congregation for *paying forward* through the ministry of this home.

J. Andrews, staff

On behalf of the four residents who live at the parsonage, and our entire staff, thank you.

Becky Dahler, staff

Thanks for sweetening our day with your generous spirit. With gratitude –

*Joe O'Donnel, Jason Bell,
Keith Nemitz, Rick Colucy*

A Note to Zion from Pastor Bob Brigham:

I was amazed by the presence of Zion people at the service remembering my wife, Barbara. In a book I recently read by Karen Armstrong, *The Case for God*, I came across some words I'd like to share. “Religion’s task, closely allied to that of the arts, was to help us live creatively, peacefully, and even joyously with realities for which there were no easy explanations, and problems that we could not solve: mortality, pain, despair, and outrage at the injustice and cruelty of life.” I feel I am in the darkness of grief altered by the support and love offered by so many Christian sisters and brothers. It has been a revelation of godly love, and it certainly eases my loss. Thank you all very much—Pastor Robert Brigham

CANTON CITY LUTHERAN

When I was reading through the booklet to honor Zion's 175th Anniversary (in order to prepare for our 195th this year), there toward the back was a list of many other congregations in our area that were also celebrating milestone anniversaries. Prominent on that list were our downtown Canton churches: First (196), Trinity (171), Martin Luther (165), and Bethel (84). Earlier this year, Martin Luther closed, and moved in with Holy Trinity on 55th and Middlebranch. The three remaining congregations worked cooperatively toward the formation of a new ministry, which is now called the Canton City Lutheran Parish. On Sunday, December 6th, the Rev. Darla Ann Kratzer, who has served as the Pastor at Bethel since 2003, will change hats and become the first Pastor of this new Canton City Lutheran Parish. The Rev. Frank Gross, who recently retired as Pastor of St. Paul's in Alliance, will serve as the parish's Associate Pastor.

"The covenant (which links the congregations) has a two-fold purpose," Pastor Kratzer said to a Repository reporter. "One is for Lutherans to work together in ministry and outreach in the city of Canton, and secondly, because of financial pressures, especially in non-growing areas." Under this new parish covenant, each congregation will maintain their own facilities, worship services, and church councils. Each church will contribute a set amount of money to the parish. Pastors Kratzer and Gross will coordinate their presence on a rotating basis at the three churches so that each can maintain its own worship services and traditions. This arrangement is not a prelude to merger. It is an experiment in its own right, as Lutherans look to find some creative answers to the difficult problems that plague many of our downtown city churches, both around the country and right here among our own neighbors, too.

MORE NEWS FROM ZION

With the changes of seasons in the church year, many will notice that our liturgical paintings, which hang on the walls of our Sanctuary, also change. There are some constants that remain in place throughout the year, liturgical paintings with symbols of Word and Sacrament, Prayer, and the Spirit. These paintings add color and meaning to the place where we worship. They often elicit comments about how aesthetically pleasing they are to the eye, and sometimes people wonder if anyone has provided formal explanations of their meaning. We begin that narrative with this newsletter on pages 13 and 14, where Carol Rossbach, our resident artist at Zion, offers a brief explanation of the symbols these paintings display.

From All of Us to
Each and Every
One of You:
We Wish You a
Very Merry
Christmas
and a Happy
New Year, too!

OUR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS LITURGICAL PAINTINGS

(Designs and Explanations by Carol Rossbach)

AN ADVENT SYMBOL, TRUMPETS:

Throughout history, heralds have announced the coming of a king with the blast of trumpets. They serve the same function in Scripture. For example, trumpets are used to announce the second coming of the Lord, itself a theme of some Advent lessons. “The Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the archangel’s call, and with the sound of the trumpet of God.” (1 Thessalonians 4:16) Compare this with Matthew 24:31 and 1 Corinthians 15:52. In Revelation 8—9, trumpets announce the arrival of the great plagues. Trumpets are also a means for celebrating God’s presence in the temple in Jerusalem. “With trumpets and the sound of the horn, make a joyful

noise before the King, the Lord!” (Psalm 98:6) The exuberant doxology concluding the book of Psalms includes this line: “Praise him with trumpet sound: praise him with lute and harp!” (Psalm 150:3) Thus in Advent the uplifted trumpets can serve both as a call heralding the arrival of the Lord and also as a sign of the joyous festivity found in God’s presence.

AN ADVENT SYMBOL—FOUR CANDLES: No symbol has come to represent the season of Advent more than the Advent wreath. The lighting of a candle for each new week as Advent progresses communicates the time of preparation unfolding and the impending arrival of the birth of Jesus. But the expanding luminosity can signify other important aspects of Advent also. In the northern hemisphere, the season in nature is the time of greatest darkness, the winter solstice. In that context, the gradual spreading of light is a powerful reminder of one of the great themes of the gospel of John, the light of Christ that overcomes the world of darkness. “His life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.” (John 1:4b-5) Jesus said, “I am the light of the world; whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” (John 8:12) As the Advent season progresses, the light increases until at last Christmas with its news of great joy arrives. The four candles can be used to symbolize the spreading of light in darkness, as well as the progression of time through the four weeks of Advent to the birth of Christ.

OUR ADVENT AND CHRISTMAS LITURGICAL PAINTINGS

(Designs and Explanations by Carol Rossbach)

CHRISTMAS SYMBOL, CANDLE & HOLLY:

The candles are white, the color associated with angels and the birth of Jesus, and spell out the word *Joy*, which describes the season. There are many legends concerning holly. Holly – and its counterpart, ivy – became connected to Christmas through pagan traditions. Several species of holly are evergreen plants, and in just about every European winter celebration tradition, evergreen plants were important – holly, ivy, mistletoe, and coniferous trees (like Christmas trees). They didn't die as the days got shorter and colder; they were a sign, in a dead winter landscape, that life would return. In Christian folklore, the prickly leaves of Christmas holly trees came to be associated with Jesus' crown of thorns, and the red berries were

associated with drops of blood shed for humanity's salvation. The wood from the holly was used for Christ's cross, at least, according to one legend. In fact, some scholars think that the word *holly* is simply a corruption of *holy*, although there is no general consensus on this point.

CHRISTMAS SYMBOL—THE MANGER & STAR: *“And she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.”* (Luke 2:7) This reference to the manger in Luke is the basis for the traditional belief that Jesus was born in a stable. Stables were often caves with feeding troughs – or mangers – carved into the rock walls. Despite popular Christmas card pictures, the surroundings were dark and dirty. This wasn't the atmosphere Jews expected as the birthplace of the Christ. They thought their promised Messiah would be born in royal surroundings; but God is at work wherever He is needed, even among the poor, in places where it is dark and dirty. The Star (of Bethlehem) refers to the “bright and morning star” of Revelation 22:16, who is Jesus Christ. It signifies the *Star of Bethlehem*, which guided the Magi to Jesus, and, more generally, to the innumerable stars created in of Genesis 1:16. “Arise, shine; for your light has come; the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. Darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen on you. Nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.” (Isaiah 60:1-3)

