

GREETINGS FROM THE PASTOR:

August is typically a relaxing month as the congregation prepares for the start up of the new program year in September. September offers our *End-of-the-Summer Labor Day Weekend Party* on Sunday, September 5th, *Rally Day* on Sunday, September 12th, the beginning of the *2010-2011 Sunday School Year* on Sunday, September 19th, and then on Saturday, September 25th, we host the *Northeastern Ohio Synodical Women's Retreat* here at Zion. September promises to be active with all sorts of events at Zion. However, August has wound up with a pretty active calendar as well. We've got lots of things on the front burner, beginning with our need to take up the old carpet and roll out the new!

We've been thinking about new carpet in the Narthex, Main Hallway, and Church Office for quite a while now. Ever since the new HV/AC system has been installed, we have regarded new carpet as a nice finishing touch. The Men of Zion have been hosting Prime Rib Dinners to raise money for the new carpet since December of 2007; and with their help, our New Carpet Fund stands ready to help with \$6,701.06 in the bank! That's almost as much as we'll need. Still, we will need to schedule a Congregational Meeting because this expenditure (1) was not included in the budget, (2) exceeds \$5,000.00, (3) is not a congregational emergency, and (4) has not previously been approved. This is a great example of how the Zion Congregational Family has the final say about how we spend our money. Scheduling a *Congregational Meeting* in the middle of August – *August 11*, to be precise – is also a great example of living on the edge in wondering if a quorum is possible!

So, be sure to join us on the Wednesday evening of August 11. Dinner is served in Luther Hall at 6:15 p.m., with our Congregational Meeting to follow in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. While you are at it, be sure to join us on the Saturday of *August 21*. That is the day of our *Community Yard Sale*, an experiment in mission as we seek to invite our neighbors to participate in what could be a great neighborhood tradition. We are trying to rent one hundred spaces on the lawn surrounding our parking lot. The cost is \$10 for one space, and \$25 for three. We hope to raise \$1,000 for the ministry we do for our community through the Food Pantry & Clothing Closet. Since this is also the weekend of North Canton's Main Street Festival, we thought we could advertise our Yard Sale by distributing flyers from our booth at the festival. Also, since this is the weekend of North Canton's Main Street Festival, we can use your help hosting our booth.

If we can find the vendors that help us to rent one hundred spaces, and make it through the weekend of August 21—22, then we will be well on our way to celebrating the birth of another joyous tradition, the return of our *End-of-the-Summer Party* on Labor Day Weekend, when we will welcome *Zach* back for a Sunday afternoon of what promises to be great music, great food, and great fellowship! The good, old-fashioned, tail-gating GRILL-OFF will surely prove to be yet another mouth-watering rendition of unbelievably delicious food; and we all remember how much fun it was to listen to *Zach* entertain us with his really talented ensemble of one. All I can say is that September 5th is a date you will not want to miss. So, mark your calendars for yet another high point of congregational family fun here at Zion Lutheran Church. We've got a lot going on with the new program year that begins in September; and it all starts in August.

CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

July’s meeting was an opportunity to welcome three new Council members: Juanita Cignetti, Council Secretary; Beth Shaheen, Social Outreach Ministry Elder; Vicki Givler, Parish Life Ministry Elder. Our President, Jim Fidler, did just that. Also in attendance were Susan Heyard (Vice President), Dave Palumbo (Treasurer), Cathy Harvey (Caring), Mark Votaw (Resource), Jim Dansizen (Witness), Dale Jacobs (Worship), and Pastor Sherwindt. Chris Thomas and Tina Beaber were enjoying their vacation.

The June Treasurer’s Report indicated that income was keeping up with last year’s pace, but expenses are running ahead of last year, mostly because we have our full complement of support staff this year. We’ve steered clear of special projects fund-raising this year so that we can focus on meeting the increased demands of our Operating Budget. The five-Sunday month of August should help us close the gap as we enter the new program year; but we will need to see increased giving in order to run closer to even for the year. The surplus of \$14,903.77 with which we entered the year has provided a nice cushion for dealing with our year-to-date deficit; but we are looking for greater generosity to help us get back in balance by the year’s end.

ZION'S FINANCIAL FACTS FOR JUNE	
June Income	15,599.06
June Expenses	<u>18,266.29</u>
June (<i>Deficit</i>)	(2,667.23)
Income through June	115,238.66
Expenses thru June	<u>124,308.50</u>
2010 YTD (<i>Deficit</i>)	(9,069.84)
2009 YTD (<i>Deficit</i>)	(4,612.98)
<i>We thank you for your generous support!</i>	

COUNCIL NEWS (CONT'D)

Parish Life Ministry: The North Canton Ministerial Association Coed Softball League has begun its second season, the Round Robin Tournament. Team Zion joined with Faith United Methodist to end the regular season with one victory, six losses, one tie, and one rain out. The Round Robin Tournament began on July 25, when Team Zion unfortunately forfeited to Church of the Lakes Team #2. Our season continued with a win against Community Christian on August 1. We will end the season with a game against Northminster Presbyterian on August 8. While victories were overwhelmed by losses, all who joined us, both on the field and in the stands, had a great time making Sunday afternoons interesting and fun, with everyone a winner. We extend our thanks to Bob Lancashire for serving as League Commissioner, as well as our starting pitcher, to Jon Votaw for helping out with managing the team, and to all our players: Randy Cizek, Valerie Cizek, Alex Robbins, Melissa Riffle, Matt Leasure, John Rhodes, Tom Votaw, Laura Kay, Taylor Roman, Johanna Henderson, along with Debbie and Diane Lancashire.

Mutual Ministry: The process of looking ahead to the 2011 operating budget begins with staff reviews and compensation recommendations. Susan Heyard convened her committee, which includes Jim Fidler, Kay Davis, Blair Woodside, and Lorraine Weinman; and they have met with Pastor Sherwindt, Fred Locker, Miriam Keating, and Jayne Schrader, with Suzanne Walters and Tim Himebaugh yet to come. Council reviewed their recommendations, approved them thus far, and, when completed, they will be passed on to the Finance Ministry, which Laura Thompson chairs.

MORE COUNCIL NEWS

Witness Ministry: Jim Dansizen reported on the upcoming events of the Community Yard Sale and the Main Street Festival, both of which will take place the weekend of August 21—22. The Community Yard Sale has the support of the Men of Zion and the Church Council. We are looking to rent 100 spaces for \$10 per space, or \$25 for three. This will help us raise \$1,000 for our Food Pantry & Clothing Closet. Shirley Cavender will lead our efforts in organizing a concession stand. She thinks it will help if we ask our members and friends to donate some brownies for the big event! That sure does sound delicious, and pretty profitable, too.

Our hope is to involve neighbors in our Yard Sale. Our location could prove to be a real resource for folks in the neighborhood who want to benefit from joining forces to create one huge yard sale, rather than taking their chances with each house organizing their own. This could also be a great opportunity to talk to our neighbors to find out more about how we might offer programs that serve their needs and meet their interests. Our promotion campaign includes signs on our lawn and a quarter page ad in *Our Town*. Plus, we will pass out flyers while we host our booth at the Main Street Festival. With good luck, God's grace, and your help, we just might succeed in reaching out to our neighbors and helping our Food Pantry serve our community.

**Community Yard Sale
Saturday, August 21
Help Your Neighbor
Help Yourself, Too**

(All Net Proceeds Will Help Zion's Food Pantry & Clothing Closet)

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Hear Ye! Hear Ye!

A quorum is very much needed as we gather at a Special Congregational Meeting on the evening of Wednesday, August 11, in order to approve the purchase and installation of new carpet for the Narthex, Main Hallway, and Church Offices.

Our Trustees looked at six separate bids, and the Church Council is recommending a snag-proof carpet that is a bit darker than our present carpet. Its hues of blue and strains of purple will complement the colors we feature in our Sanctuary. Its pile is short and dense to help it wear well.

The cost for the carpet and installation will be \$6,812.30, assuming there are no special circumstances or complications. Heritage Carpet, a local business with a store in the Acme Plaza on North Main, will be the vendor. Since we had so much trouble with the glue holding the carpet we're replacing, we asked that Heritage to offer a two-year warrantee on the adhesive, which they did.

Volunteers from Zion will tear out the old carpet, and prepare the floors for the rolling out of the new carpet. This will involve taking out old radiators, sawing off and grinding down water pipes, patching and painting the walls, removing the old cove base, and preparing the floors to serve as a solid base for our new carpet.

Dinner begins at 6:15 p.m. in Memorial Hall, with the meeting to follow in the Sanctuary at 7:00 p.m. There is a whole lot to do as we prepare for this project; but mostly we need you to focus on helping to make sure that we have a quorum at this very important meeting.

WE ARE WITNESSES

Zion's Witness Team has been busy trying to reach out on all fronts. In June, it was the Sunday Brunch Bunch, a small group of food-minded members who enjoy going out for lunch after worship on Sundays. The Walters, the Fidlers, the Votaws and Weinmans are always happy to welcome new folks to their on-going tradition of breaking bread and sharing laughter as we grow in love and service by grace. Many others sometimes join in the fun; and you're invited, too. Just show up for worship, and the rest will take care of itself.

The Witness Team has also investigated the possibility of scheduling some *community interest events*, like the series of *Prosecutor's Presentations*, which address such topics as *Self-Defense, Stranger Danger, Internet Safety, Scam Alert, Neighborhood Watch*, and the like. Any of these topics could form a good connection with the families that live in our neighborhood, and that is part of our mission as a church and history as good neighbors. Our first attempt to schedule one of these Prosecutor's Presentations may have to wait until October; but keep your eyes peeled and your ears open as plans are made and information unfolds.

Have you heard enough? Well, the Witness Team is not through yet! We're not quite sure who is actually overseeing it, but we are sure that we're going to have a great time at what will be an encore edition of our *End-of-the-Summer Party* on Sunday after worship on September 5th. *Zach* will be back to entertain us; and the great *Grill Off* is set for another celebration of having too much food for all who join us! Invite friends and neighbors. We are all witnesses to the good news that Zion is a community that cares about our neighbors, our friends, and everyone in between.

MAIN STREET FESTIVAL

Zion has signed up to join the fun of North Canton's **MAIN STREET FESTIVAL**, which is scheduled for the weekend of August 21—22. In honor of the occasion, the *Square of the City* will be closed to motorists from 5:00 p.m. on Friday through to 7:00 p.m. on Sunday. There will be live entertainment, food vendors, arts, crafts, children's activities, and a host of North Canton organizations celebrating the good news of how great it is to be a part of the North Canton community!

While we are now *old hands* at this Main Street stuff, we still plan to pull out all the stops and are planning to distribute all sorts of stuff, like Zion pencils and pads, with balloons, candy, washable tattoos, coloring books and brochures. This year, Mark Votaw and Brian Walters have promised to wow the crowds – and all of us – with a multi-media display highlighting all the good things we do here at Zion. This should be a sight to behold! You will not want to miss it.

It should be great fun, and, as usual, we will need lots of help from our Zion family to help us spread the good news of our presence to all the folks who are lucky enough to meet us! We are looking for volunteers to help with hosting our booth in two-hour intervals from 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Saturday and then on Sunday from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

NORTH CANTON'S 14TH ANNUAL MAIN STREET FESTIVAL

SATURDAY & SUNDAY, AUGUST 21—22

PLEASE HELP WITH TWO-HOUR SHIFTS
SIGN-UP SHEETS IN THE CHURCH OFFICE

(Our Witness Team hard at work: Jim Dansizen, Lorraine Weinman, Elaine Fidler, Kelly Walters, Howard Dansizen, along with lots of others, too.)

GOOD NEWS ABOUT ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

Sunday, September 5th: An *End-of-the-Summer Party* on Sunday Afternoon after worship
Sunday, September 12: *Rally Day* celebrates the beginning of another Sunday School Year
Sunday, September 19: The official start of classes for the *2010-11 Sunday School Year*

SUNDAY SCHOOL REMINDER: PRE-K THRU 12TH GRADE

We're taking a break from Sunday School this summer. There are no Sunday School classes for our kids this summer, giving students some vacation time and teachers time to get re-charged for the new year. We'll start up again in September when we kick off the Sunday School year with Rally Day on Sunday, September 12th, and classes beginning on Sunday, September 19th.

A FINAL LOOK AHEAD FOR VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

We experienced a whole lot of fabulous generosity during Vacation Bible School. Between our kids' daily offerings, our annual quilt raffle, the ice cream cart, the donation cans, and extra gifts from special friends, we raised \$1,000 to help with the ministry of our Food Pantry and Clothing Closet. We plan to take some time during our *End-of-the-Summer Party* on the Sunday of Labor Day Weekend, September 5th, to make a Special Presentation of this year's check from VBS to Shirley Cavender and the Food Pantry Crew! Everyone who had a hand in helping us raise the money is invited to enjoy the great food, great music, and great fellowship we plan to share at what has become our *Second Annual End-of-the-Summer Party* following worship outside in the Parking Lot and under our Pavilion. There will be lots to do for kids of all ages. Everyone's invited. Come, and join us! You'll be glad you did; and so will we.

The Children's Daily Offerings	\$ 373.27
Our Family Night Quilt Raffle	\$ 170.00
The VBS Ice Cream Cart	\$ 43.36
Ice Cream Social Donations	\$ 27.00
Extra Gifts from Special Friends	<u>\$ 386.37</u>
<i>Our Gift to the Food Pantry & Clothing Closet</i>	<i>\$1,000.00</i>

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

Our Adult Sunday School Class continues to meet in Luther Hall between the services, even during the summer. We have been talking about Moses and Joshua, with a few other topics thrown in from time to time. In leading God's people to the promised land, Moses created huge shoes to fill; and, with God's help, along with dancing feet and sounding trumpets, that's exactly what Joshua did. In passing along the wisdom he had gained in life at the end of his life-long campaign to claim the land God promised, Joshua provided a call to faithfulness that has stood the test of time for three thousand years. *"Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness. And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."*

It is interesting to think back and remember how Cecil B. DeMille's movie classic *The Ten Commandments* presented an image of the Jews as a close-knit family of tribes just waiting around for a leader to lead them to freedom. Moses showed up, and before long everyone is ready to move on to the glory of being a people! What we've discovered, however, is that the *Habiru* were not a nation-in-waiting. The *Habiru*, from which the word for *Hebrews* derived, were slaves imported from the parched deserts of Palestine. The local rivalries that divided these desert tribes made them easy pickin's for larger nations with organized armies. If you want to get a sense of how difficult it is to turn a tribal culture into an organized community that can function like a single nation, just look at Afghanistan. So it was for ancient Israel, whose forty years of wandering in the wilderness gives us a sense of how long it takes to transform disparate tribes into a single nation. Forty years was just a start.

JAYNE'S ECOLOGY CORNER

Why Go Green: When I first heard the words *go green*, I knew that it had nothing to do with *Kermit the Frog*, *the Jolly Green Giant*, or *the Wicked Witch of the West*; but I also realized that I really didn't know what it meant. So, I turned to the *World Wide Web* and found out that to *go green* means to take care of where you live, namely, Earth. Is that defined as chaining yourself to a tree in front of an impending massive bulldozer? No. Is it defined as using only products not tested on animals? No, again. *Going Green* means having the three *R*'s become a part of your life: Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle. Last month I talked about *Recycling* and *Reuse*. So, for this month I looked up the *R* that stands for Reduce, and I found that *Reduce* basically means this: watch what you waste.

What we all can do is reduce the amount of *wasted convenience* we encounter every day. (1) Bring your own coffee mug rather than getting a paper one if you get coffee every day. (2) If you drink several bottled waters a day, rather than tossing them out when empty, refill them. (3) Take canvas bags to the grocery store rather than using plastic or paper bags. (4) Reduce the amount of trash tossed out each month by recycling what you can and make sure items being tossed are trash. What we throw away has an impact on our increasingly interconnected planet. If we want to maintain the standard of living we currently enjoy and pass it on to our children, it will take an all-hands effort to preserve the foundation of that standard of living – clean air, water and soil. The more we throw away, rather than reuse, the more space we take up in landfills. When a landfill becomes a *land-full*, taxpayers have to build new ones. The less we throw away, the longer our landfills last, saving taxpayer money and providing important community (and planetary) benefit.

THE MEN OF ZION

The Men of Zion have been so active this month that it is hard to know where to begin. The big event on our horizon is the new carpet. Three years of Prime Rib Dinner fundraisers have made this necessary improvement a possibility this month! Congregational approval is essential, and we'll need your help with all the work that surrounds putting in new carpet, and a few more donations will be needed, too. But what a great treat it will be for all of us when the new carpet is a done deal.

For your information, we've got a painting party planned for Sunday afternoon, August 8, at 2:00 p.m. We've got the paint; we've bought the brushes; just bring yourself, and a willingness to have a great time doing some good work for the church. Then, later this month, we'll need your help when we have to move all of our equipment, including the Secretary's office module – computers, phones, desk and all – out of the office and into Luther Hall so that the carpet can be installed in the Church Office area.

And that's not even the half of it! We're going to be helping with the Community Yard Sale, and the Main Street Festival, too. Mostly, we are looking forward to that fabulous event we created for all the serious grillers in our congregation with the *End-of-the-Summer Party*. Who will ever forget the huge complex Randy Cizek called his grill, and the mountains of delicious food all the men provided for everyone who came? We'll still need members and friends to provide all the extras on an afternoon that should make a great day for a picnic. As good as last year's Great Grill Off was, this year's will be even better. That's Sunday, September 5th, right after worship in the parking lot, under the pavilion, and out on the lawn. See you there!

THE WOMEN OF ZION

The Power of Prayer: Our first two sessions covered the importance of persisting and patiently waiting for God in prayer. In this final session we will seek to discover the power that is available to us as believers through the practice of prayer. It's important to keep in mind that prayer connects us to God, the power source of our lives; and the power of our prayers does not depend on the person praying, the passion behind the prayer, or even the purpose of our prayer. The power of prayer resides in God – God's will, God's promises, and God's faithfulness. You are invited to join in our study of prayer at the monthly *Women's Bible Study*, which takes place on the third *Tuesday, August 17*, in the Resource Center. We meet at 9:30 a.m.

The Women of Zion think that *now is the time* to take advantage of back-to-school specials as we support Lutheran World Relief's call to put together our Health Kits and School Kits. You'll remember that **HEALTH KITS** include a hand towel, a wash cloth, a comb, a nail file, a bar of soap, a toothbrush, and a package of 3/4 inch band-aids. **SCHOOL KITS** include spiral notebooks, blunt scissors, 12-inch and metric rulers, 2 ½ inch erasers, unsharpened pencils with erasers, pencil sharpeners, crayons (box of 8), colored construction paper, 12 X 14 inch bags with handles. Generous cash donations are also appreciated. We can do the shopping, or help LWR pay for the shipping.

Zion's Comfort Givers are back at it, sewing in Luther Hall the second & fourth Thursdays of every month at 9:30 a.m. We're a little short-handed, as several among us are still nursing nagging injuries. So, any help that you might give will be much appreciated. We're a fun bunch, and you'll enjoy the time we share and the good we do.

THANK YOU'S TO ZION

Dear Students of Vacation Bible School,

Thank you so much for the goodie bags filled with a wonderful assortment of coloring books, crayons, fun pads and other fun items you donated for the children who are hospitalized here at Akron Children's Hospital. The children who need to spend time at the hospital always enjoy receiving special gifts from special friends during their stay. They especially enjoy any activities to pass the time as they await their procedures. You can be sure your donation will provide many hours of enjoyment for our sick patients.

Thank you for choosing to brighten the lives of the children in our care. What a wonderful project for your Vacation Bible School to undertake! Please know you have made a difference by touching the lives of many children. We truly appreciate your time and efforts, your kind hearts and your thoughtful generosity. Way to go Zion's Heroes!

*Linda Ralston, Manager,
Volunteer Services
Akron Children's Hospital*

THANK YOU'S AND MORE

To the Zion Lutheran Congregation,

Many thanks to all. Your thoughtfulness meant so much. Thank you for your cards, your phone calls, the weekly mailings, and the Chancel flowers during the long period of recovering from my mishap, when I broke my arm. Also, thank you for the single, long-stemmed red rose from the Mother's Day Breakfast, and for Pastor Sherwindt's visit.

*God bless you,
Helen Ballentine*

Dear Pastor Sherwindt,

Your recent visit with communion was really appreciated. The dictionary defines *gratitude* as a *profound appreciation toward another individual*. Until I can find a better word, *thanks* will have to do. I miss being a part of the office crew on Friday mornings. I look forward to getting around more as my shoulder heals. Thanks for caring.

*Love in Christ,
Betty Tracy*

A Day Away with Jesus

*Northeast Ohio Synodical Women's Retreat
Hosted by our own Zion Lutheran Church
349 Lindy Lane NW in North Canton*

*Your day at Zion will include:
Devotional Services to be led by
Pastors Eileen Woyen and Sue Rogers;
Continental Breakfast & Catered Lunch;
Bible Study by Pastor Carolyn Wagar Hier*

*We will receive In-Kind Gifts for the Stark
County Hunger Task Force through Zion's
Food Pantry, and a Love Offering for the
Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service*

Saturday, September 25, 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF RUTH NEWBAUER STORCH

April 21, 1916 – July 27, 2010

Ruth Storch was loved by everyone at Zion. By the time I arrived as Pastor, Ruth was already well into her eighties, and her active involvement had been curtailed a bit. But what a resume of active involvement she had built up over the years: the first Church Office Secretary at Zion; a Sunday School teacher at any and all grade and age levels; a longtime member of our Chancel Guild; a member of our Building Committee early on; a member of the Choir; part of the Transportation Team that offered rides to worship for those who needed them; a Visitation Assistant who brought holy communion to the home-bound; a faithful member in Zion's many fellowship groups, including what was once called Ruth Circle; and a valued resource in offering mandatory training classes for Sunday School teachers here in Zion, with workshops in Alliance and Massillon, too. Ruth was a faithful member, a wonderful friend, a great, great aunt, a caring sister, loving mother, and a perfect witness for the mission of the church. *Faith active in love*: that's how Luther said it; and that's the witness she offered and lived.

My sermon text is Isaiah 43:1-3. *"Thus says the Lord, who created you and formed you: 'I have called you by name; and you are mine. When you pass through the waters I will be with you, and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you. When you walk through fire, you shall not be burned, and the flame will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.'" What a powerful text, and how about that last line? "I am the Lord, your God." It sounds almost formulaic, nothing special, just God signing off after some powerful assertions. But it's more than that. It's not God signing off as some impersonal Supreme Being or Greater Power. It's not God signing off with some philosophically sanitized definition of deity. "I am the Lord, your God." It's personal for God; and it's personal for us. That's why this signature line is so powerful. "I have called you by name; and you are mine." God doesn't know us as a mere statistic, identified by species, one in the three hundred million Americans, or one in five billion people on earth. God knows each one individually by name as the person we are, with all the particulars that make us who we are, embracing us with the full depth of His divine being and the gentle touch of His unconditional love.*

The text reads like a baptismal pledge: *"I am the Lord, your God: I have loved you. I have known you, called you by name, and claimed you as my own."* This Baptismal pledge rings out with the same clarity today as it did ninety-four years ago: *"Ruth Eileen Baughman Petty Newbauer Storch, child of God, you've been sealed with the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross of Christ forever."* Just think of what a powerful word and comforting promise this was for Ruth, whose world was taken from her with the death of her mother at the age of nine, the oldest of three, whose father then realized that he couldn't provide what his children needed as a single dad. She was left to be adopted by extended family. I don't want to make too much of the transitions that were forced upon Ruth early in life. She clearly found her way, and the church – this church, our church – played a pivotal role in serving as the place that did more than help her find her God. It was this place where she also came to find herself. Ruth would be the first to confess that God's love filled the void. Life's unlucky lottery didn't shape Ruth's outlook, affect her determination, hold her back, drag her down, or deter her from trusting God's love and using her faith to make the difference God desired. I say this in part as a tribute to Ruth, but mostly in praise of God, whose love gave her life purpose, with meaning and a mission, together with a family of friends ready to share everything that matters most, the life we can have when we live each day and give our all ... in Jesus' name. Amen

IN LOVING MEMORY OF MARY AGNES CORBETT

January 25, 1910 – July 15, 2010

Mary Agnes Corbett lived a blessed life, following in the way of her Lord through the worship she offered and the service she lived for one hundred years, five months, and twenty-five days. If ever there were a person whose passing provided the perfect fit for a life well-lived, Mary's would clearly be that witness to the hand of God forming her death with the grace that marked her life. As a rule I rarely ever refer to death in friendly terms. Scripturally speaking, death is nothing other than the final enemy. Philosophically speaking, our mortality possesses a finality that can stop us cold. Theologically speaking, death is ultimately a one-of-a-kind power that would feign to be God were it not for the victory over the grave proclaimed with the Good News of our Lord's Resurrection. Death is the thief and robber that Jesus describes in John 10, who sneaks in to steal away those whom we love, desiring to rob even God of the joy that comes with the precious gift of life He alone can give. In Mary's case, however, I will make this rare exception because of how perfectly her faith formed her death into the timely news of going home to be with her Lord forever. As she lay in her bed at the Canton Christian Home, with her blanket pulled up to just below her chin, with a look of peace on her face and the confidence of resurrection enveloping that perfect picture, how could I not but defer to Mary's rock-like faith and unwavering trust in the promises of God's faithfulness and the truth of God's Word to claim us with a love that will never let us go.

Mary owned the front pew on the pulpit side at the 10:30 a.m. service at Zion Lutheran Church since moving to North Canton back in 1995. She participated with all that was in her, not in an intrusive way that called attention to herself, but as a source of reliable support, completely unassuming in her expectation that everyone wanted to be inspired and uplifted by the opportunity to gather together as God's people to offer our worship and praise. We made several changes at our 10:30 a.m. service so that we would be more family friendly in today's world. We changed the music, and the instruments, too, along with focusing greater attention on our children by offering nursery care and a children's sermon every Sunday. Mary loved all the changes we initiated, with a willingness and interest to offer her unsolicited advice on how to improve what we were doing! To this day the members who volunteer to do the children's sermons always end by leading our children in a prayer because Mary suggested it, and she was surely right in reminding us how important prayer is, even for children, especially for children.

"Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful over little, and now I will place you in charge of much. Enter in the joy of your Lord." These are the words that will resound from the heavens when Mary's life is placed in the context of the good she did, the neighbors she served, the love she shared, and the joy she inspired. Use whatever superlatives you will. There is probably no better image of the life she lived and the hope she cherished than what Paul expresses in 2 Timothy, when he recounts how important it is to be persistent in proclaiming God's love in both good times and bad, always encouraging one another with patience in teaching, soundness of doctrine, and faithfulness in living. "As for you," he writes, "always be sober, enduring suffering well, doing the work of an evangelist, as an ambassador of Christ's love." Then, in words that apply perfectly to Mary, he writes, "The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, finished the race, and kept the faith. Henceforth, there is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord will give me on that great and glorious day and not only to me, but for all who have longed for his appearing." [2 Timothy 4:6-8] Well done, good and faithful servant! All that God has promised is now yours, and will be ours, too, as we trust God's love and live each day ... in Jesus' name. Amen