

GREETINGS FROM THE PASTOR:

We promised that August would be busy as we prepared for the arrival of a new program year, and by every objective measure, none were disappointed. We experimented with a *Community Yard Sale* for the first time, and my, oh, my, what a success it was! Between the donation of spaces and the rental of spaces, we made over nine hundred dollars; and then our Food Pantry Crew, with the concession stand they ran and the donated items they sold, cleared another five hundred dollars! All net proceeds will be used to support the Food Pantry and the Clothing Closet. We thank the Witness Team, the Men of Zion, the Church Council, and the Food Pantry Crew for their hard work in demonstrating that this idea promises some interesting possibilities for adding to the resources that help fund our Food Pantry & Clothing Closet. While Zion's members were among the most supportive in coming out to sell their stuff, we had a very nice showing among neighbors and yard sale devotees, suggesting that we can build for next year.

In the meantime, we have been planning for our *End-of-the-Summer Party* on the Sunday of Labor Day Weekend. Once again, it looks like a great time is in store for everyone who joins us. The Men of Zion have taken the lead in making sure that we'll have plenty of grills fired up and ready to create some of the finest selections of great tasting ribs, burgers, brats, dogs, and a few surprises that you won't want to miss. Some great side dishes, all sorts of salads, delicious desserts, and drinks: it's all going to be here at Zion on Sunday, September 5th. Good food that tastes great, and Zach is back, the one-man band from Parma, who has not only been featured in northeast Ohio magazines as one of the area's finest, but has also proved as much with the great show he offered at Zion last year. Good food, live music, lots of fun, and all for a good cause. This year we will use our *End-of-the-Summer Party* as a fundraiser for the many ministries we offer throughout the year. Your donation of \$10 will be one of the more enjoyable ways we have for supporting what we do to share Christ's love through our life together at Zion.

During the week that follows this party, we will keep the focus on food, with a picnic for the Senior Choir on Wednesday and a *Rally Day Reception* on Rally Day Sunday, which is September 12th. The Senior Choir will sing for the first time this season during the 8:00 a.m. service on Rally Day. Between the services, there will be food and fun for all. Our Sunday School kids will have games to play and snacks to eat, while us older kids will enjoy some nice treats in Luther Hall. We'll have a nice fresh fruit salad, bagels and cream cheese, muffins, danish, coffee and juice. If there is one thing we do well at Zion, and there are, in fact, many, enjoying the good food we serve is certainly at the top of that list. Make sure to mark Sunday, September 12th, on your calendar. You will not want to miss the choir's return at worship, great food in Luther Hall, and a lot of fun for kids of all ages during the Sunday School hour.

With Rally Day behind us, we can move on to the start of the new program year on September 19th. That Sunday will also signal the arrival of our new carpet. Won't that be great to see as we enter the Narthex, walk down the Main Hallway, or step into the Church Office? September looks to be an exciting month for Zion. We hope that you'll join us for the food and the fun, as well as for the work we do and the worship we offer. God has blessed us in so many ways that beginning our week with praise and worship we offer is simply the right thing to do. So, mark your calendar. Make every effort to be with us. It's our hope that ... we'll see you in September.

CHURCH COUNCIL NEWS

For a lazy, hazy, crazy day of summer, our Tuesday night meeting in August offered some real excitement, with great attendance: Jim Fidler, Susan Heyard, Juanita Cignetti, Dave Palumbo, Cathy Harvey, Mark Votaw, Beth Shaheen, Dale Jacobs, Vicki Givler, Jim Dansizen, and Pastor Sherwindt. We heard good news about a softball team that had finished the season strong. The Witness Team had some big plans for August with our first ever Community Yard Sale and North Canton's 14th Annual Main Street Festival. But it was the Treasurer who got us started with some interesting facts about the budget.

The July Treasurer's report saw an unusual shortfall of income relative to expenses, unusual not for summer but for us. We have enjoyed pretty good giving the last several years, even during the summer months of July and August. But this July was different, as our monthly deficit of \$4,381.74 left us with a year-to-date deficit of \$13,451.58. We responded by addressing this challenge in a way that only Zion could. We resolved to *Eat Our Way out of the Deficit!* We will use our *End-of-the-Summer Party* to raise funds for our many ministries, and we will sell \$10.00 coupons for Hungry Howie's Pizza with the same goal in mind. If we can make some progress with this idea of eating our way out of the deficit, then we could find ourselves in pretty good shape as we enter the fourth quarter, which is usually our most generous.

Zion's Financial Facts for July show that we are running a year-to-date budget deficit of \$13,451.58. Fortunately, we entered the year with a cumulative carry-over surplus from 2009 of \$14,903.77. Still, we must do a better job of balancing income with expenses in order to plan a healthy budget for 2011.

MORE FINANCIAL FACTS

The New Carpet Fund: The Men of Zion have been making good progress over the last few years with their Prime Rib Dinners raising money for the new carpet, which we thought might make a great exclamation point to the great successes we've had in renovating our Sanctuary, sound system, and HV/AC system. The carpet is now almost here, and we are very close to having all the money we need to replace it. Should all go according to plan, the new carpet installation will cost \$6,812. We estimate that additional costs related to painting and preparation will be about \$750, bringing our needed total to \$7,562. We have decided to replace the old water fountain with a new one, which will better serve both adults and children. Our fundraising to date stands at \$7,125. So, if you have not yet had a chance to help with this project, we remain open to donations. We continue to work on getting ready for the new carpet – cutting old water pipes, removing the radiators, redoing some of the walls. The big projects awaiting us involve moving the Church Office into Luther Hall, and then taking up the old carpet. We sure could use a lot of help. Let us know if you're available.

ZION'S FINANCIAL FACTS FOR JULY

July Income	18,014.53
July Expenses	<u>22,396.27</u>
July (Deficit)	(4,381.74)
Income through July	131,664.10
Expenses through July	<u>145,115.68</u>
Deficit through July	(13,451.58)
Carry-over 2009 Surplus	+14,903.77
2010 YTD Cash Surplus	1,452.19
2009 YTD Cash Surplus	3,028.29

We thank you for your generous support!

MORE COUNCIL NEWS

Witness Ministry Elder Jim Dansizen had lots to say in looking ahead to a busy August. Our *Community Yard Sale* has really come together for us. The Food Pantry Crew volunteered to work the Concession Stand. The Men of Zion have taken charge of set-up. The Church Office has been active in organizing the list of vendors that will fill our 100 spaces. We're learning as we go. We will take some time at our September meeting to review what we've learned as we look ahead to planning for next year's edition.

The *Main Street Festival* [now past] had a whole new look for Zion. Mark Votaw and Brian Walters designed new banners, and they made use of new technologies for a more dynamic audio and visual presentation. We featured our very popular Zion Coloring Book, which was produced by Jim Dansizen and *Our Town*. There was the usual array of treats and gifts, which included washable tattoos, wrist-bands, pencils, pads, and lots of brochures, some about us, others about Luther, and some about the Pastor. Our thanks to all who helped host and those who came to visit our tent on Main Street.

We are also looking ahead to planning one of our *Prosecutor's Presentations* for the evening of Wednesday, October 6th. We will focus on *How to Start a Neighborhood Watch* in the hope that we can attract some of our neighbors to join us. There will also be a demonstration on self-defense, along with finger printing to interest the kids. It should be an interesting evening, and we ask that members show their support by joining us. The Witness Team is always open to fresh input and new members. Our team presently consists of Jim Dansizen, Elaine Fidler, Lorraine Weinman, Howard Dansizen, Kelly Walters, and Pastor Sherwindt. Join us.

THE MEN OF ZION

Zion's End-of-the-Summer Party is on for Sunday, September 5th. It's going to be another great time, with great food, the very best of live entertainment, and lots of fun. Our grillers are back. **Zach** is back. We hope that you'll be back. For those who may not recall, **Zach**, a one-man band from Parma who has performed on-stage with folks like the Dave Matthews Band, Neil Young, War, and Chicago, was voted by the readers of *Akron Life & Leisure Magazine* as THE BEST LOCAL BAND. For those who do recall, make sure you're here on Sunday afternoon, September 5th. Y'all come now.

In the meantime, the Men of Zion have some finishing touches to plan at our monthly **Men's Meeting**, which is set for the first Wednesday of the month, **September 1st**. We will meet at 6 p.m. for dinner in Luther Hall. You're invited. We'll keep the coffee hot and a seat warm. We're going to try out those new pizza coupons we've been bragging about. The coupons cost \$10.00, all of which goes to Zion. We'll order some large pizzas, enjoy the taste of some good pizza, and savor the true joy that comes with a great discount. These coupons are also customer loyalty cards. So you can enjoy the discount ten times, and then receive a free pizza!

LUTHERAN MEN IN MISSION in the Canton Massillon Conference invite you to come to their **Annual Steak Fry/Chicken Dinner**, on Saturday, September 25th, at the Pavilion in Paris, beginning at 6:30 p.m. (The Pavilion is at the corner of Paris Avenue and SR 172.) Everyone is invited to enjoy a delicious steak or chicken dinner with all the fixin's for just \$15 per person. All proceeds will be matched by Thrivent, and then used to support future ministry activities. Contact Bernie Bresson or Jamie Savarin with questions.

THE WOMEN OF ZION

The monthly Bible study for the Women of Zion meets on the third **Tuesday, September 21**, when we will start our nine-month Bible study of *Unity in the Midst of Diversity*. In Session 1 we ask the age-old question, “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3) The Apostle Paul understood that unity, diversity, and harmony are all key elements in helping us to understand what it means to be the people of God. This is a particularly important time to undertake this study. It’s been a big part of the challenge that the ELCA has been struggling with since the Churchwide Assembly last August. In fact, Bishop Mark Hanson has contributed to this month’s Bible study with his timely article in *Lutheran Women Today* entitled “Unity: God’s Gift in Christ.”

Dr. Eric Law will be our guide on this journey of faith. Reading the Bible takes a lot of listening – to the Word, to each other, and to the world around us. Session 1 reviews some of the basics that have been introduced through the ELCA’s *Book of Faith Initiative*. The Bible is a book that fosters devotion and prayer. It is a book that requires an understanding of history. It is a book that is valued for the great literature it contains. Finally, Lutherans have a number of insights that help to read and understand the Scriptures. This study will help us grow in all these areas.

We invite all of Zion’s women to join us on **Tuesday, September 21, in the Resource Center at 9:30 a.m.** You will enjoy the fellowship, and we’ll enjoy your company. Also, that same day, in the evening, the **Chancel Guild** has scheduled their annual get-together to work on polishing the silver and cleaning the Chancel. That’s on the schedule for **September 21 at 6:30 p.m.**

WOMEN’S FALL RETREAT

Zion Lutheran Church will host this year’s Fall Retreat of the *Northeastern Ohio Synod Women’s Organization* – NEOSWO for short! This gathering is set for **Saturday, September 25**, from 9:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. The theme is **A DAY AWAY WITH JESUS**.

Two kinds of offerings will be received: an *In-Kind Offering* for Zion’s Food Pantry (inviting items like feminine hygiene products, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, toilet paper, canned tuna, kid-friendly cereal, canned fruit, diabetic foods); and a *Love Offering* for the Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service (please note that checks should be made payable to NEOSWO).

The day begins at 9:30 a.m. with registration, an In-Kind Offering, and a Continental Breakfast. Pastor Eileen Woyen will lead our morning devotions. Pastor Carolyn Wagar-Hier will lead our Bible study. Cathy Byers will offer general announcements, along with some information about the Triennial Convention. Pastor Sue Rodgers will then lead our Closing Devotions. The cost is \$15 per person. Please get your reservation in by September 10 by sending them to Diane Bennet, NEOSWO Treasurer, 15106 Pine Valley Trail, Middleburg Heights, OH 44130.

The Women of Zion thank you in advance for your support in their drive to provide Lutheran World Relief with more Health Kits and School Kits this year. Our **HEALTH KITS** need hand towels and nail files. Our **SCHOOL KITS** still need 12-inch and metric rulers, crayons (box of 8), and spiral bound notebooks. Any assistance will be very much appreciated by the Women of Zion, Lutheran World Relief, and children around the world.

GREAT NEWS FROM ZION'S SUNDAY SCHOOL

UPCOMING EVENTS – MARK YOUR CALENDARS!

- Sunday, September 5th:** Zion's *End-of-the-Summer* Party: Great food, fun, and music!
Sunday, September 12: NO SUNDAY SCHOOL scheduled for our Rally Day Festivities
Sunday, September 19: The 2010-2011 Sunday School Year begins today at 9:15 a.m.
Saturday, October 16th: 2010 Youth Missions Fall Craft Show, 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

RALLY DAY AND BREAKFAST FARE

Rally Day will be Sunday, September 12th. This is going to be a great event filled with fun and fellowship! Rally Day will take place between services in the gym starting at 9:15 a.m. There will be carnival games, relay races, refreshments, and more for the kids. We will have lots of information to give the parents along with the necessary forms for Sunday School. We will see you at 9:15 a.m. on September 12th as we kick off the new Sunday School year! By the way, Rally Day is for adults, too! In addition to refreshments for kids in the gym, we will also have a very nice breakfast buffet in Luther Hall for the adults who decide to join us for Rally Day. Finally, we are calling all of Zion's older youth to help out with Rally Day, along with anyone else who might be interested. We will need helpers to set up and lead our games and activities. Set up will begin at 8:30 a.m., and our activities will start at 9:15 a.m. Any help that you can offer will be greatly appreciated.

ZION'S NEW SUNDAY SCHOOL YEAR

We are always looking for new volunteers to help with teaching and leading our Sunday School classes, from Pre-K through High School. It is always great to have new and fresh ideas for our program. If you are interested in being a teacher, a classroom helper, or a substitute for these positions, please contact Debbie Fox at 330-966-2433. It is such a rewarding and enjoyable opportunity to share God's love and His Word with Zion's Youth!

PRE-K THROUGH THE SIXTH GRADE

We are looking forward to Rally Day and the start of the new Sunday School Year! We have a year of great lessons and activities planned, along with our Christmas and Easter Programs. We will also have our traditional Halloween Party, service projects at Thanksgiving and Christmas, and other fun events this year! We have classes for kids age 3 through 6th grade. This year's staff includes Connie Riffle, Janet Slease, Sharon Stout, Vicki Givler, and Corlene Coulter. We will be using a new curriculum that allows our children to learn important Bible story lessons through fun activities. It will be a year full of fun and learning. See you on September 19th!

MORE GREAT NEWS FOR ZION'S YOUTH

CONFIRMATION INSTRUCTION AND THE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS

Confirmation classes will start up again on Sunday, September 19th, at 9:15 a.m. in the Resource Center. This class is for all 7th and 8th graders. Renee Schrader will continue to lead our Confirmation Class, which follows the "Here We Stand" Confirmation program.

We extend a heartfelt thank you to Renee for her continued support and commitment to our Confirmation Class. She is a great teacher and a tremendous resource. We ask that parents show their support by making sure that their children are in class and on time.

Our High School class will also start Sunday, September 19th, at 9:15 a.m. Tina Beaber will again lead this class. We are very grateful for the time and dedication Tina has committed to this class and to our kids; and we encourage all of our High Schoolers to join us each Sunday morning for an important and fun life experience.

FALL OKTOBERFEST YOUTH MISSIONS CRAFT SHOWS NEWS

The Craft Show will be here before we know it, so we are planning to start working on the youth's projects this month. We will again put together Raffle Baskets for each of the Sunday School classes. We will assign each class their theme on Sunday, September 12th, at Rally Day. We would like all items to be donated for the baskets by Sunday, October 2nd. Tickets for these baskets will go on sale in October. This year the youth of Zion will again host the bake sale at the Craft Show. Their project this year will be making items like chocolate covered pretzels and oreos, no-bake cookies, puppy chow, and much more. We will also ask the Zion congregational family for additional baked goods when it's time to get ready for the Bake Sale table.

Our *Seventh Annual Craft Show* will take place on Saturday, October 16th, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Jayne Schrader and Connie Frank are looking forward to this year's edition matching last year's success. As of this writing, fifty-nine craft tables have already been rented! This is a great event at Zion that helps our youth program, and we need lots of help to make it a success. There will be sign-up sheets in Luther Hall in late September for volunteers, bake sale items and other food we will need. We encourage everyone to help out if possible. Again, we very much appreciate your support of Zion's youth!

YOUTH SPOTLIGHT PAGES ARE BACK BY POPULAR DEMAND!

Please help your children fill out a *Youth Spotlight Form*, which you will find in the Church Office, through Debbie Fox, and everywhere on Rally Day! We would like forms for all of Zion's children, ages one through eighteen. We will begin our Spotlight page again in October's edition of *The Zion Herald*. Zion's church family looks forward to reading and learning about our amazing youth! When you get a Spotlight form, take the time to fill it out, and return your completed forms to Debbie Fox by Sunday, September 19, or as soon as possible. It's a big part of what we do, and we really like including them in *The Zion Herald*.

ADULT SUNDAY SCHOOL

The focus of the Adult Discussion Forum between the services in Luther Hall on Sunday mornings has turned completely and exclusively to our study of *Amazing Grace*, the movie. This 2006 film, complete with an all-star cast and a great production crew, tells the story of William Wilberforce, who was responsible for steering anti-slave trade legislation through the British parliament in the 19th century. The title is a reference to the hymn *Amazing Grace* because the author of this hymn, John Newton, is an influential part of the story that sustained Wilberforce through the long journey that, after a series of set-backs and disappointments, finally culminated in the passage of an 1807 Act of Parliament that banned the slave trade in the British Empire forever.

We watch excerpts of the movie as we follow a study guide that introduces questions for discussion. We are very blessed to have Chuck Danner as our moderator, leader, and all-around audio-visual guy, partly because he knows how to operate all the technology we get to use, but mostly because his background as an engineering student at Georgia Tech University in the 1950s offers some great insights into the struggle with race (as the aftermath of our history with slavery) that has shaped our lives and our nation. As many know, it is virtually impossible to keep our class focused on our “assigned” questions; but that is precisely what allows us to make connections with issues that affect the nuts and bolts of everyday life.

Each class begins with an excerpt from the movie. The questions that are raised and discussed make all sorts of connections with our faith because it was the Christian faith that drove our culture to condemn and abolish the institution of slavery.

JAYNE'S ECOLOGY CORNER

Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle: The past two months I talked about the three R's and what they mean. I gave some examples of what everyone can do to “do their part” in helping to limit what goes to a landfill. Hopefully, they can become a way of life for all of us. Another word I began to hear was *carbon footprint*. What exactly is a *carbon footprint*? It is an estimate of how much carbon dioxide we produce to support our lifestyle. Basically, it measures our impact on the climate based on how much carbon dioxide we produce. Factors that contribute to our carbon footprint include travel methods and general home energy usage. The following are some facts I found on the internet about water use, which strengthened my resolve to do whatever I can to make my carbon footprint smaller.

Between 1950 and 2000, the U.S. population nearly doubled; however, in that same period, public demand for water more than tripled! Americans now use an average of 100 gallons of water a day, enough to fill 1,600 drinking glasses! It's a fact that about 75% of the water we use in our homes is used in the bathroom. If your toilet is from 1992 or earlier, you probably have an inefficient model that uses between 3.5 to 7 gallons per flush. Newer, high-efficiency toilets use less than 1.3 gallons per flush. If just 1% of American homes replaced an older toilet with a new *WaterSense* labeled toilet, the country would save more than 38 million kilowatt-hours of electricity – enough electricity to supply 43,000 households for a month.

Leaky faucets that drip at the rate of one drip per second can waste more than 3,000 gallons of water a year. A full bath tub requires about 70 gallons of water; a 5-minute shower uses only 10 to 25 gallons. It's these little things that change the world. So, let's do our part.

ZION'S SENIOR CHOIR

If you are a present, past, or potential choir member, then this invitation is for you:

I have been extremely blessed and pleased to work with such a wonderful group of singers, and have been honored with the opportunity to continue in this capacity for another church year.

We would like to start off the year with a combination cookout and rehearsal on Wednesday, September 8th. The cookout will begin at 6:30 p.m., followed by our first rehearsal. Dale will be coordinating this event. If you would like to come, then all we ask is that you bring the following: Sopranos – salad or side dish; Altos – dessert; Tenors – 2 liters of pop or ice tea; Basses – Hot dog & hamburger buns.

For the first rehearsal, I have put together a schedule of rehearsal dates and times, along with a calendar of our service schedule, which includes special services, as well as the planned anthem for those dates.

If you have not sung in the choir for some time, or at all, we hope that you will prayerfully consider joining us to sing praises to God! We are hoping to completely fill the choir pews this year.

Looking forward to a great choral season with you being a part of it!

Blessings,
Fred Locker

Remember, and don't forget: Zion's Senior Choir will resume rehearsal on Wednesday, September 8. Our first Sunday to sing will be Rally Day, which is Sunday, September 12. We are looking for additional voices to join us this year. If you are at all interested, contact Fred Locker at 330-265-5129.

THANK YOU'S AND MORE

Pastor Sherwindt and Members of Zion:

Larry and I are so thankful for your kindness and support both to Mom during her illness and to us while we were in Ohio. The service truly honored her, and she was blessed to have Zion as her church family.

It is during times like these that we realize how much our friends and relatives really mean to us. Your expression of sympathy will always be remembered.

*Fondly, Jennifer Modlin
Daughter of Ruth Storch*

ZION'S FOOD PANTRY

When we have a new client at Zion's Food Pantry, I always introduce myself. I give them the *spiel* about who we are, how long we have been in existence, and the general rules of how we work. I let them know that not only are we a part of Zion Lutheran Church, but we are also the only pantry in North Canton that belongs to the Stark County Hunger Task Force. We are 1 of 27 pantries under the umbrella of the Task Force, and we are also a member of Akron Canton Regional Food Bank. Belonging to these two entities carries a few privileges. We can participate in the annual *Postal Drive* every Spring. We have easy access to food drives in the area. We can use two Hunger Task Force vehicles. We have a voice in the local fight against hunger. As you can tell, I am proud of Zion's Food Pantry, and its links with the Stark County Hunger Task Force.

It has been nine years since I assumed a central role in overseeing the ministry of our Food Pantry. The things we've accomplished together would never have occurred without your good will and support. We enjoy a great sense of volunteerism, and generous donations have come our way from the congregation and the community. We saw two major fundraisers this past summer, with *Vacation Bible School* in June and the *Community Yard Sale* in August. Together they brought in over \$2,250! These proceeds have enabled us to purchase food in larger quantities, which allows us to acquire a better quality of product that is sometimes unavailable when funds are more limited. Thank you for that.

With the arrival of the school year, the holiday season is not all that far off. I look forward to sharing this season with our clients, the cheerful food pantry and clothing closet volunteers, and the good folks of Zion.

MORE PANTRY NEWS

Last year we shared with you that for the first time in our nine years in overseeing Zion's Food Pantry, Margaret and I were required, because of the pantry's affiliation with the Akron-Canton Regional Food Bank, to attend a workshop that offered training in making sure that we, and all our volunteers, honor and respect the civil rights of our clients. It was an odd request, since it was – and is – our love for God and the folks we serve that moves us to devote our time, our energy, and our lives to making sure that our pantry makes the difference God desires. Nevertheless, we understood the purpose and took part in the workshop, which turned out to offer some helpful hints for doing what we do better. So, this year, Margaret and I are doing the training and offering the workshop on issues of food safety and Civil Rights. So, mark your calendars for Saturday, October 5, from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., right here at Zion, with training to be held in Luther Hall.

*May God Bless Everyone,
Shirley Cavender*

Did you know? Even though the summer months are pretty slow, with folks kind of laid back and on vacation, our Food Pantry enjoyed some exceptional generosity, with \$1,000 from Vacation Bible School, and more than that from our Community Yard Sale, and \$250 from the local Elks, and \$500 from yet another friend of the pantry. Thank you all for caring and for giving!

Did you know? While Zion assumes most of the financial support of our Food Pantry, Community Christian Church is one of our most faithful and generous supporters; and Grace United Methodist Church is a big supporter, too. Thank you sister churches from the North Canton Ministerial Association!

AUSTIN'S ARMENIAN ADVENTURE CONTINUES

The transitional period has come to a close. Fifty-six Peace Corps Volunteers (PVCs) received their assignments. The formal end to this phase was marked with a dinner in Yerevan, the capitol of Armenia. Two PCVs were selected to present brief speeches at the banquet, one male and one female. Austin was the male. His brief speech contained the answers to many of the questions that many of us have asked at one time or another. So, I have included excerpts of it for your enjoyment.

“As everyone here knows, 10 short weeks ago 56 volunteers packed our lives into two 50-pound bags and left behind our friends, family, daily routines, and American food. Each of us got onto an airplane with 55 strangers to spend the next 27 months in Armenia. Before I left, the most frequently asked question I encountered in America was “so you’re going to Armenia, but what are you going to do there?” All I could tell them was that I would be a Community and Business Development volunteer; now, I can say that I will be working with an NGO in the *Syunik Marz* that is focused on education and civic partnership.

“Throughout our language training, expanding our repertoire of verbs has been a crucial point of explaining our thoughts, needs, and just generally about us. This afternoon I would like to increase our vocabulary to include the following verbs, which I think represent a few of the pillars of what it means to serve with the Peace Corps: to adapt, to aspire, and to build. First, to adapt. A good friend in Boston used to say that the best measure of one’s intelligence is their ability to adapt. To adapt is to make something suitable for a new use or purpose. Since the moment we arrived, we have been adapting to a new culture with its own unique history, a new language with more letters than we Americans can pronounce, and living with a new family.

“Second, to aspire: Cesar Chavez once said, ‘We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community.... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.’ Before I joined the Peace Corps, I was working for a financial firm that provided capital to start-up companies. Whereas the majority of my projects were investments in *companies*, here I will aspire to learn how to make investments in *people* and their ambitions to affect broader change beyond a reasonable rate of return. I want to work to help those around me fulfill their aspirations.

“Lastly, to build: William Arthur Ward, an American business author, wrote that ‘we can throw stones, complain about them, stumble on them, climb over them, or build with them.’ The Peace Corps is here to focus on building: building friendships with our Armenian partners, building a larger network of global volunteers, and building bridges across cultural divides. We have begun to forge relationships through community projects. We have started assimilating to Armenian culture through living with host families and cross-cultural studies. We are constantly aspiring to support one another, helping those around us, and adapting by finding new ways to keep on building.

“There is no short list of people to thank: our host families for their warmth and hospitality; our language teachers, technical trainers, and program managers for their patience and desire to help; the Peace Corps staff that helped bring all this together; and, of course, the other volunteers. We are all in this together. Before we go, I’d like to share a few words of advice that I found through a mutual friend, *Google*, ‘Security is mostly a superstition. It does not exist in nature, nor do the children of men as a whole experience it. Avoiding danger is no safer in the long run than outright exposure. Life is either a daring adventure, or nothing.’” [The adventure continues. So stay tuned.]