

News from the Hill



WE ARE THE CHURCH TOGETHER

by Pastor Jim Watson



I hardly know where to begin to write to you in this month's News From the Hill. Our whole world has changed with the spread of the coronavirus. Two months ago, our February newsletter had no mention of it at all. Last month, the March newsletter's list of prayer concerns included "those affected by coronavirus" – it still seemed far away, like somebody else's problem. But this month, it's in our community, and hard to get out of our minds! New terms and names are now familiar to us: covid-19, social distancing, Dr Fauci, Amy Acton. As I write this in the last full week of March, schools and some businesses are closed, and we're under a "stay-at-home" order until after Palm Sunday. Infections and deaths are still increasing exponentially, and our country seems badly unprepared for anything like this.

The people of Zion continue to pray for those affected. Now, that also includes ourselves, and people close to us. We haven't been able to worship together since our tentative, safety-precautioned services on March 15. We have canceled our amazing Passion Walk for this year. Palm Sunday has already been ruled out for worship together by the stay-at-home order, and with estimates that the virus won't peak before May, it's very doubtful we'll be able to gather for our Holy Week and Easter services. This is the most dramatic health crisis of my lifetime – and my mother, who was born during the Depression, can't remember anything like this either.

So what do we say about all this? I think of a line the Apostle Paul wrote to the church in Thessalonica when their faith was wavering and they were worried that they had missed something, as believers began to

die before Jesus' return. Into that crisis, Paul wrote: **"We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about those who have died, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope" (1 Thess 4:13).** And then he went on to explain about the resurrection: God is with all of God's people, even in crisis and death. We can't be separated from the love of God, nor from the bond that makes us one family in Christ. We are the church together, no matter what. Paul ends this section of the letter by saying: **"God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing" (1 Thess 5:9-11).** The church goes on being the church in times of crisis. We take care of one another, and give a witness to the world that God's love overcomes every kind of suffering.

So in our current time of crisis, we take the same course. We stay faithful to who we are, knowing whose we are. We avoid the extreme route of fear and despair, because we know that no matter what, we are God's. And we avoid the opposite extreme path of arrogantly testing God, claiming that God will protect us no matter how recklessly we blunder into obvious risks. The path of faith, the way of love, is to think with the brains God gave us, love with the hearts the Spirit has transformed, and use the hands and feet that make up the Body of Christ to go where there is need and help where we truly can. We are still the church together.

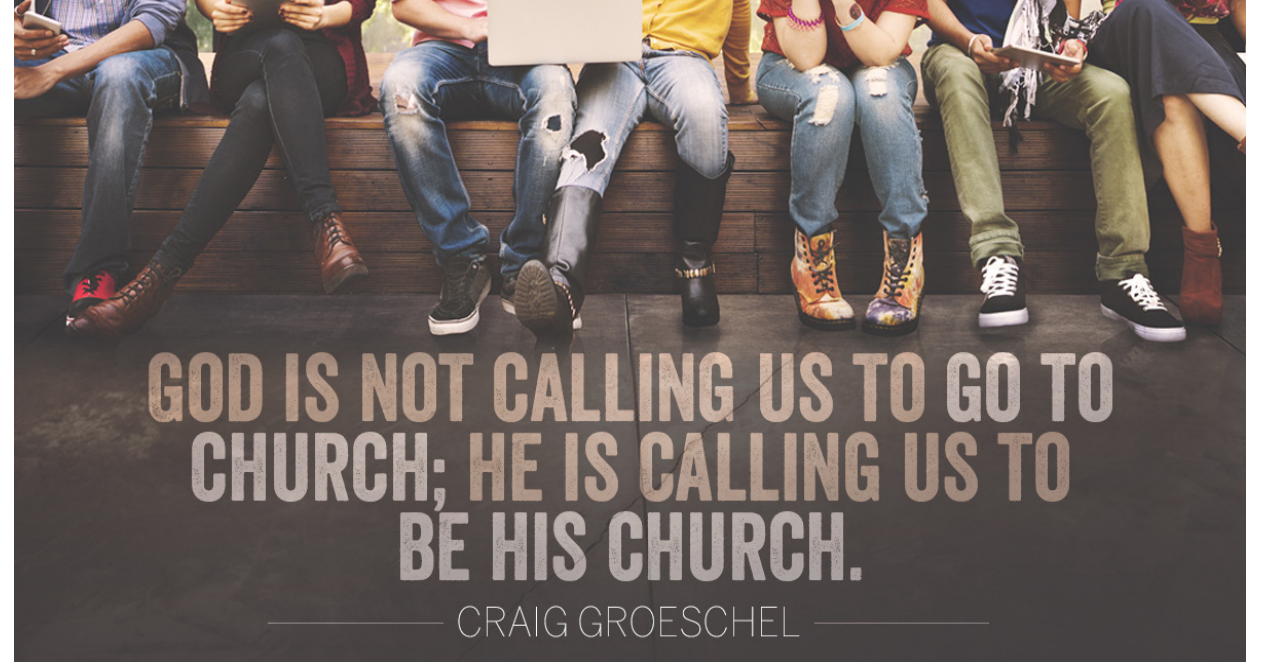
So in our current time of crisis, we take the same course. We stay faithful to who we are, knowing whose we are. We avoid the extreme route of fear and despair, because we know that no matter what, we are God's. And we avoid the opposite extreme path of arrogantly testing God, claiming that God will protect us no matter how recklessly we blunder into obvious risks. The path of faith, the way of love, is to think with the brains God

gave us, love with the hearts the Spirit has transformed, and use the hands and feet that make up the Body of Christ to go where there is need and help where we truly can. We are still the church together.

We, the people of Zion, are still only beginning to figure out what this means in these current times. Separated in distance for the health of ourselves and our whole world, we're learning how to reach out and stay in touch with each other. Unable to gather in one place for worship, we're scrambling to explore how technology can let us see and hear one another at least a little bit, and be united in prayer.

I hear from a lot of people that we are missing one another, and missing the church building that has been our home for so many things over the years. When I do go there to get something essential done, it saddens me that this fine building, which has accommodated the people of Zion since 1896, stands mostly empty and quiet. I wonder if there have ever before been two or three Sundays in a row when worship couldn't be held here.

But I do not want you to be uninformed, brothers and sisters, about what the church really is, so that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope! We are in a time of shock and disorientation and, yes, grieving. And that is normal and okay. But it doesn't define us. What defines us as the church is the call of Christ. We are saved by his grace and formed by his Spirit into the church. That's why I chose for this month's 3:16 verse a passage I've highlighted but in a slightly different translation: Surely you know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you! – 1 Corinthians 3:16 (Good News Translation)



The church is the people, not the building! And so the church is still as close to you as ever. You can find the church when you pick up the phone, or wave to a neighbor, or check in with somebody by email or text or video chat. The church is still active and still doing God's work, whenever you send a note of encouragement, or pick up groceries for someone in need, or offer a prayer.

I also miss seeing and talking with all of you, shaking hands and sharing the peace and enjoying Sunday morning refreshments together! But I also know that this time of trial comes with new possibilities that wouldn't be available to us otherwise. Maybe we'll rediscover the value of a daily routine that includes scripture reading and prayer. Maybe we'll see someone in a new and unexpected way, and thus learn more about this marvelous Body of Christ we make up together. Maybe we'll find comfort and inspiration in whatever small group formats we can arrange, with lasting friendships and benefits. Maybe now and in the time of recovery to come, we'll find new depths of strength and faith in ourselves.

Whatever happens, we are still God's people, and God is with us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God. We are destined not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ. We thus encourage one another and build each other up. We take care of one another, and give a witness to the world that God's love overcomes every kind of suffering. We are the church together, no matter what.

With love and blessings, and prayers for each of you, God's peace be with you, church!

The Passion Walk has been

CANCELLED!

Due to the Coronavirus Outbreak, this year's Passion Walk has been CANCELED. Many thanks to Mary Ann Dagleish and her crew of directors, market people, actors and anyone who volunteered to be in this outreach this year.



REMOVE ALL DECORATIONS FROM CEMETERY BY MAY 1. HANGING PLANT POLES CAN STAY.



EASTER in-person service and breakfast have been CANCELED this year due to COVID-19.

Please check the website at Zionvc.org to see what streaming options are available for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter services.

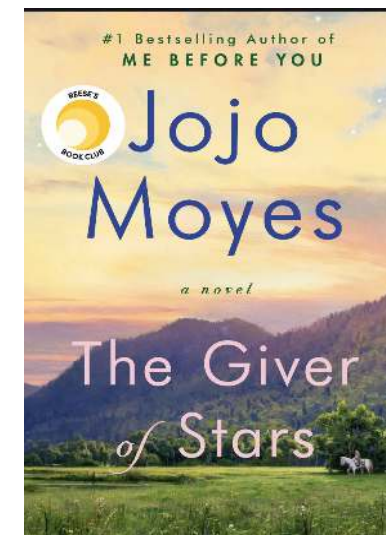


THANK YOU!!!

The sewing circle would like to thank everyone who has contributed sheets, blankets, and mattress pads so that we could make Quilts for the Lutheran World Relief program. We have enjoyed working together and hope that you like the quilts that we have displayed on the quilt rack in the hall way.

CARD MINISTRY

Obviously, we are not all signing cards on Sunday mornings! However, Zion Card Ministry continues to send a card to those who have milestone birthdays, anniversaries, or who have been on the Prayer List. Your cards to individuals will keep us related as the "Body of Christ."



ZION BOOK CLUB

THERE IS NO BOOK CLUB IN APRIL

Next Book Club will be **May 11** in Zion's Library Area Hosted by Judy Wolff

Book: The Giver of Stars
Author: Jojo Moyes

BABY BOTTLE CAMPAIGN FOR OAKS FAMILY CARE CENTER



During Lent, we are collecting change in baby bottles for the Oaks Family Care Center. You may pick up a bottle in the gathering area. Checks need to be written to Zion Lutheran Church. Please, return the bottles by Easter.

"I'D LOVE TO TELL THE STORY...BUT..."

Cleveland-West Conference Gathering Sat., March 14 from 9 am-12 pm at St. Paul Lutheran Church, 276 E Bagley Rd in Berea.

Come learn how easy and affirming it is to share your faith story in your everyday life. This workshop is for ANYONE. It will inspire you, and help you to identify and share your faith story. RSVPs to Bryan Penvose at blpenvose@sbcglobal.net are appreciated, but not required.

APRIL OFFERING EMPHASIS

04/01	WEDNESDAY	FEEDING MEDINA COUNTY
04/09	THURSDAY	JACOB S PORCH
04/10	FRIDAY	LUTHERAN OUTDOOR MINISTRIES
04/12	SUNDAY	ELCA



Summer will be here before you know it!! It's time to register youth for summer camp. Although Mowana has closed, there are still LOMO camps available with week-long programs for those just completing kindergarten through 12th grade. Please look for informational posters in the Gathering Area. See Hope Hellwig if you're interested in a Campership! The sooner we register, the bigger the discount!

NEWS FROM THE PEWS....

Thanks to the various Zion organizations and volunteers who provided delicious soups, breads, desserts, etc. for the Lenten Soup Suppers. Your donations were really appreciated. Also, many thanks to Pastor Jim for leading us on our Lenten journey.

Outreach and Ministries sends a big "Thank You" to everyone who donated fleece, cut the blankets, or joined in our Bind It Together event to tie blankets for the children at Akron Children's Hospital. We delivered 19 blankets that will wrap ill children in God's love through your hands.

Dear Zion Congregation – Thank you so much for the care package and card. It came at a perfect time! I am beyond blessed with a family at Zion to support me and encourage me in every way! Thank you for that! Update: School is going well! I am super busy! I still love my major (Animal Science/Pre-Vet) and being an RA! Miss you all!

- Love, Faith Alley

Many thanks to Dick Hill, Bob Jenne, and other team members for all the work they put into installing a shower in the men's restroom in the basement. Great job!

Robin Reisner thanks her Zion family for the cards and birthday wishes she received on her birthday!



ARE YOU OR DO YOU KNOW SOMEONE WHO IS GRADUATING FROM HIGH SCHOOL OR COLLEGE?

It's that time of year where we want to recognize our students who are graduating from high school or college. Please let Heike Gombar know if you have a graduate. She would also like to know the school/college, what degree they graduated with and what their future plans are so we can recognize them in the May bulletins & newsletter. We need this information so we can plan accordingly for the Graduate Recognition Sunday on Sunday, May 30.

FIRST COMMUNION AND CONFIRMATION NEWS

Communion Instruction classes have been suspended for the time being, and Maundy Thursday, April 9, has been withdrawn as the suggested date for First Communion.

Also, at the time of this writing, we can't promise that our selected date of April 19 will still be an option for Confirmation Sunday.

New dates will be set for both of these important milestones of faith, as soon as it's clear that we can do so safely. Please watch for more information. And pray for these students and their families!

YOUTH SECTION

Jr. Choir has been canceled until further notice.



VIRGINIA M. McDONALD

SCHOLARSHIP



Applications for the Virginia M. McDonald Scholarship are available and may be found under the mailboxes at the back of the church or email Barb Schumacher at schuboxxi@aol.com for a copy of

the application. **Deadline for applications** to be returned to a Board member is **JUNE 30, 2020** and must be completed as described in the cover letter. Applications must be totally filled in and ALL documents required must be attached. **READ YOUR COVER LETTER.** Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Lost and Found

After the COVID-19 pandemic is over and we are able to go to church, please check the coat racks and Lost & Found chest in the Library Area (near the coach & chairs). There are many items. Who knows... you might find some-thing you have been looking for!

KIDS' KINDNESS CLUB

(Kindergarteners through 6th Grade)



CANCELED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE!

HISTORY BOOK UPDATE: CALL FOR EDITORS AND MEMORIES

Thanks to the amazing talents of Billie Meyers and Barb Lewis, the history book project is on its way. Editors are needed to review text and layout. If you'd be willing to volunteer, please let Hannah Severence know. Also, if you are willing to share any memories about Zion, those are welcome! We would love to include faith stories or favorite memories of Zion in the book, but not many have been collected. What do you love about Zion? What does your faith mean to you? Do you have a memory of a special person, event, service project, outreach, or group ministry?

If you're willing to share a story or memory, please contact Hannah Severence at palindrome_7@yahoo.com, 330-321-2447, or simply write it down! Memories or stories don't have to go in the book, but can be archived with other historical documents if that is preferred. It's important to share our stories so we can continue to grow in faith and service to the Lord in new ways. Help inspire someone's faith today!

Zion Church Women

Please note that the next meeting is **Monday, May 4, 2020 at 1:00 PM.** Bible Study leader is Barb Steingass using the April study from "gather" magazine. Jane Gunkelman and Janice Calame will serve refreshments. All women are welcome to join us for bible study and fellowship.



NEWS FROM THE PEWS....

Congratulations to Arline Radden who will be celebrating her 80th Birthday on Weds., April 22. Let's help her celebrate! Happy Birthday, Arline!

Congratulations to Brian & Stacy Fitzgerald on the birth of their son, Jackson, on Jan. 9, 2020. Jackson joins big brothers, Lucas & Landon, in the Fitzgerald family. Congratulations also to grandparents Bryan & Diana Muntz, and great grandmother, Mary Muntz. Best wishes to the Fitzgerald family on your new addition to the family. God bless you all!

Congratulations to Carrie Penvose and the Buckeye Jr. High Science Olympiad Team which advanced to the State Tournament at The Ohio State Tournament in April! It takes a lot of hard work, and God is with you all the way!

People of Zion...No matter if you think your voice carries, some of us cannot hear you. Please use a microphone to deliver your message so we can all hear your message. Thank you.

Congratulations to Preston Hart who received all A's & B's on his report card. Keep up the good work, Preston!

After at least 10 years of coordinating the Buckeye Back to School Night Event, I would like to step down from this and am asking for volunteers to take over this outreach project. All supplies are already purchased for the 2020-21 school year, and I will mentor anyone who would step forward. This would be good for 2-3 people to work together, preferably someone with children in school. If interested, see me (Judy Porter).

A very belated thank you to my dear friends at Zion for the cards and phone calls I received. Also, thanks to the ones who came to visit while I was recovering from my surgery. Again, I thank you. God bless each one of you.

-Genie Crocker



Birthday Blankets!

for Lutheran World Relief

This project honors loved ones by giving a donation of \$5 for each blanket. The honoree's name will also appear in Zion's Newsletter. If you would like to participate, give the birthday information and payment to Judy Porter.



THE SALVATION POEM

Jesus, You died upon
a cross

And rose again to
save the lost

Forgive me now of all
my sin

Come be my Savior,
Lord, and Friend

Change my life and
make it new

And help me, Lord, to
live for You

FAIR TRADE SERRV UPDATE

Although we had hoped to place another order in March, the SERRV warehouse in Maryland, staffed by volunteers, has been closed at state direction. Barb Steingass has a few Fair Trade items in her "basement warehouse." Call her or text at 330-241-0322, if there is something that you could use. We will try to have social distancing, etc. in the transfer. If nothing else, it would be a blessing to talk or text.



SECURITY



EDUCATION



RESPONSIBILITY



RIGHTS



VALUE