

LEADERSHIP LETTER FOR JANUARY 16, 2022

To Our Zion Family,

I hope the holidays were good ones for you and your loved ones. This past Sunday, we cancelled our Sunday service due to icy weather and dangerous driving conditions. Winter had certainly arrived! We are grateful to Pastor Anita and the Our Saviour congregation for inviting us to join their service via Zoom. I was reminded of a few things while sitting at home that Sunday morning. First, the willingness of so many to jump into action at the 11th hour when needed: emails sent to our distribution list and phone calls to our supply pastor and organist to notify of the cancellation, the unsolicited invitation and provided Zoom link from Pastor Anita to join the Our Saviour service, call to WKTV to put our cancellation on the broadcast's crawler, and many individual phone calls to keep our congregants from venturing out in the dangerous conditions. And secondly, although we couldn't benefit from the warmth of friendship and collegiality in the sanctuary, I certainly felt the care and concern we have for one another while sitting at home. Thank you to everyone who pitched in to respond to Sunday's weather realities. I look forward to more favorable weather and the chance to be with those of you who are able to attend the service this Sunday!

Updates and Announcements

Sunday Worship—barring unforeseen weather developments, we return to the sanctuary this Sunday for in-person worship, led by Deacon Patsy Glista. The 10:00 AM service will be offered in-person, on Zoom, on Zion's YouTube, along with the Service of the Word found later in this letter. Log-in instructions for the Zoom service this Sunday: use the following:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwvSTBER2lNb1o1Qzd6WGxDdz09> , Meeting ID: 843 5484 0714, Password: 022654. Or by PHONE, +16465588656, 84354840714#, 1#, 022654#.

To join the service by Livestream on our YouTube channel, you can do so by visiting our page at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWzOtfCe2z7bIPvxp621A>

Pastor Rick Klafehn, our incoming interim pastor, will lead the Jan. 23rd service in our sanctuary. We invite you to attend the service, either in-person or remotely, to “meet” Pastor Rick. We are looking to provide some type of “meet and greet” with Pastor Rick and will notify you once the details are worked out. COVID certainly makes these things more complicated!

January Church Council Meeting—Your church council met on the evening of Jan. 10th. Important agenda items included the date and format for our upcoming Annual Congregational Meeting, approval of the proposed 2022 Budget to be presented to the congregation at the Annual Meeting, a review of the nominees for council positions beginning in Feb. 2022, and a decision about how to proceed with use of the parsonage.

Welcoming our interim pastor, Rick Klafehn! As you know, Zion is fortunate to have Pastor Rick Klafehn joining us beginning Jan. 18th. Pastor Rick will be with us for 10 hours each week, in the office on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00-3:00. In addition, he will lead our Sunday morning service twice each month. You can read Pastor Rick's bio in the Dec. 13-19th leadership letter (Advent 4/January Newsletter sent on Dec. 17th) and an outline of his responsibilities during this part-time interim role in last week's letter. Welcome Pastor Rick!

Thank you to Pastor Anita Mohr! With Pastor Rick's arrival, we say thank you to Pastor Anita Mohr, who has served as our transition pastor since Pastor David's departure in February, 2020. Pastor Anita has provided wonderful support and pastoral services during her nearly two years as our transition pastor. She has advised and supported our church council co-presidents, presided over numerous services to remember departed members of our Zion family, provided pastoral counseling to Zion congregants, and attended all our monthly church council meetings. Thank you, Pastor Anita! We look forward to continued connection with you and members of the Our Saviour congregation.

Annual Congregation Meeting~ this year's annual meeting will take place on Sunday, Feb. 20th, on Zoom. The Sunday service on Feb. 20th will be Zoom only, NOT in-person. Due to recently released New York State Law, "Hybrid congregational meetings are now prohibited. The congregational meeting must be entirely in person or entirely online. You may still broadcast the meeting for those who cannot attend, but those who are in the meeting online are not counted in the quorum and are not able to vote." Because we would like all of you to have the opportunity to be counted and to vote, council has decided to hold the annual meeting (and the Sunday service immediately preceding) on Zoom.

The **Annual Report** document for this meeting will be available for your review before Feb. 6th. If you receive your Zion correspondence via email, the Report will be sent to you electronically. If you receive your Zion correspondence through the US Postal Service, we will mail your Annual Report the week of Jan 31st. Anyone on the email distribution list desiring a hard copy should contact Sara in the office.

One item on the Annual Congregational Meeting agenda will be the approval of **the Proposed 2022 Budget**. The budget presented at the meeting will be a balanced budget, the first balanced budget brought to the congregation in more than a decade. The reason we can present a balanced budget is because the costs associated with a full-time pastor have been removed from the budget and replaced by the costs of an interim pastor. Our call process is currently on pause. Decisions about how Zion will proceed with our call process, along with a review of our mission as a church, will be important discussions we will need to undertake in the year ahead once Pastor Rick arrives and gets oriented.

And so we head into a new year with lots of "new things" ahead for each of us and our church. In my research to prepare this leadership letter, I found a quote that stayed with me. *When God gives you a new beginning, it starts with an ending. Be thankful for closed doors. They often guide us to the right one* (<https://biblereasons.com/new-beginnings>, author not identified). As we close the books on 2021, let us listen to what our loving God calls us to be—both as individuals and as a church congregation. And let us be thankful for the many gifts given, always!

Wishing you peace and good health,
Mark Thompson, church council co-president

2021 Annual Report: Please send your reports to Sara at office@zionluth.com ASAP. *Thank you!* Annual Reports are scheduled to be available for pick up by **Sunday, February 6th**. You can pick them up in the office or on Sundays at church. If you need a copy mailed to you, please email or call Sara in the office at 315-732-4110 (*please leave a message if she is away from the desk*). If you receive our weekly snail mail, you are already on the list to have your copy mailed to you- but if you plan to be at church and can pick yours up that would be great, just let Sara know ahead of time. Thank you!

Zion Lutheran Church
2 Epiphany



January 16, 2022

WELCOME TO ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH'S AT HOME OR ONLINE SERVICE!

PRELUDE: *O Word of God Incarnate*, arr. by Harold DeCou -Kelli Watson

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, one God, who creates us, redeems us, and calls us by name. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another. Most merciful God, **We confess that we have sinned against you and your beloved children. We have turned our faces away from your glory when it did not appear as we expected. We have rejected your word when it made us confront ourselves. We have failed to show hospitality to those you called us to welcome. Accept our repentance for the things we have done and the things we have left undone. For the sake of Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us and lead us, that we may bathe in the glory of your Son born among us, and reflect your love for all creation. Amen.**

Rejoice in this good news: In Christ Jesus, your sins are forgiven. You are descendants of the Most High, adopted into the household of Christ, and inheritors of eternal life. Live as freed and forgiven children of God. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn: *Spirit of Gentleness*, vs. 1 & 4 Hymn#396 -Kelli Watson

Vs. 1 Spirit, Spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness calling and free; Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea. You moved on the waters, you called to the deep, then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep; and over the eons you called to each thing: "Awake from your slumbers and rise on your wings."

Vs. 4 Spirit, spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness calling and free; Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea. You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes. From the bondage of sorrow all the captives dream dreams; our women see visions, our men clear their eyes. With bold new decisions your people arise.

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, source of every blessing, you showed forth your glory and led many to faith by the works of your Son, who brought gladness and salvation to his people. Transform us by the Spirit of his love, that we may find our life together in him, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: *Isaiah 62:1-5* Bible Pg. 1159

Second Reading: *1 Corinthians 12:1-11* Bible Pg. 1785

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Halle, Halle, Hallelujah



Gospel: *John 2: 1-11* Bible Pg. 1648

The holy gospel according to John. **Glory to you, O Lord.** The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

Sermon: *-Deacon Patsy Glista*

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord, Jesus Christ, who comes to us that God's full glory might be revealed. Amen.

Epiphany is a time in the church year when we focus on and celebrate the revealing of God's glory to us. Glory revealed in God's coming to us fully human as a tiny baby at Christmas and last week in Jesus' baptism. Today in the gospel of John, God's glory is revealed using a joyful celebration of a wedding feast. John's gospel could be considered a bit of an interlude, as our gospel last week was from Luke and all the rest of the Sundays in Epiphany the gospel lessons will come from Luke. As I read the gospel, I began to think about all the surprises or moments of Epiphany and the snippets of information John takes care to share that, at first reading, we might miss. Both reveal God's glory.

On the third day, there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee. On the third day of what? Third day of the week, third day of vacation - we don't know. At first glance it seems not terribly important. But it is important! John is reminding us of Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension with this reference. Here at the beginning of Jesus' ministry, John takes a moment to remind us of how it ends in the resurrection - God's amazing glory. John also tells us 'the mother of Jesus was there.' He doesn't say Mary was there, but makes a point of her being Jesus' mother. This could seem insignificant, but it is John's way of reminding us that Jesus is fully human - just like each of us, he has a human mother, lest we focus only on his being divine. Another tidbit here is that Jesus' mother is present at the beginning of his ministry and she will also be present at the foot of the cross, as his earthly ministry comes to a close. And then there's that line the wine steward shares, 'Everyone shares the good wine first.' I can't help but think about a phrase that often keeps us from trying new things, whether in our personal lives or in the life of a congregation - 'we never did it that way' or 'we've always done it like this.' But, here at the wedding, it seems more upbeat and exciting, almost like the steward is saying, 'Wow, we never tried this way before - what a great idea!'

Considering the many miracles Jesus does throughout his ministry - healing the sick and lame, raising Lazarus from the dead, doesn't it seem a little bit surprising that his first sign is to turn water into wine for a wedding celebration? For my often-practical thinking brain, a lot of this event seems somewhat surprising. First, it is Jesus' mother who nudges him to take action. Imagine Mary sitting with some other women or maybe even helping to keep the food table supplied, and she overhears the wine steward say the wine has run out. Off she goes to find Jesus and whispers to him, 'They have no wine.' Apparently, she is certain he can do something about this. While it is often mothers who nudge their children along in their life journey, providing guidance and encouragement, part of me thinks - this is Jesus, doesn't he know when he's supposed to begin his ministry? Then, after questioning his mother and clearly saying, 'it's not my time,' Jesus takes action anyway. Surprise. And he doesn't do it in a small way. He takes ordinary water and turns it into wine, not just a few bottles, but upwards of 180 gallons of wine! Surprise. And surprise, the wine steward is amazed, happy, excited, not just that now there is wine, but at the quality and abundance of the wine provided. The last surprise that struck me is in the last verse, 'Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. These are the same disciples who tried to keep the children from bothering Jesus, who tried to protect him from the crowds, who didn't know how they would feed thousands with five loaves and two fish, and who ran away and hid when Jesus was arrested. Jesus turns water into wine and, just like that, they believe!'

It's good at this point to go back a couple verses before today's gospel to John 1:50. Jesus has just called Philip and Nathanael and says to Nathanael, 'Do you believe because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than these.' This is what Epiphany is all about - God revealing God's whole self as human and divine; God revealing God's glory both then and now to us. And, like the snippets, the things that God reveals aren't always obvious at first glance or first reading of scripture. I think today's text encourages us to delve into scripture with hope and wonder about what it is that God will do next? Where might the surprises be and where are the snippets that at first seem insignificant but, indeed, reveal important understandings of God.

Jesus' ministry reveals God's glory in many different ways - not just in relieving suffering and restoring life and health. Jesus reveals God's glory as He reminds us to trust when he calls Peter to come to him on the water. He reminds us to have faith when, as Martha tries to stop his request to remove the stone from Lazarus' grave, Jesus says, 'Did I not tell you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?' Surely the wedding at Cana where Jesus turns the water turned into wine reveals God's glory; glory that is revealed to us in big ways and in varied ways, but also in ways we don't always anticipate.

God lavishes us with love in much the same way Jesus so abundantly provided wine. Isaiah says that 'the Lord delights in you.' Delight - to give great joy or pleasure, to be highly pleased or rejoice in or by something. Consider for a moment this idea that God is delighted with you, each one of us sitting here today. The Israelites returning to Judah after exile were not a perfect people coming back to a wonderful place. There had been destruction, there were economic and political issues, the people had turned away from God in the past - any of this sound familiar? Yet, Isaiah says the people will be called by a new name,

their land will no longer be desolate, and that God will rejoice over them like a bridegroom rejoices over the bride. God will delight in them. Surprise.

Our lessons today all point to the vastness of God's love and care for all God has created, including each of us. God delights in us. God shares this delight again and again, sharing grace upon grace, and revealing God's glory in big and small ways. I thought about this as I walked in the windy and very chilly weather this past Monday. After all the snowless days of winter, I wasn't excited about our winter weather advisory – ice, snow, wind, and frigid temperatures. Yet, in the midst of that advisory, I was out enjoying blue sky overhead and beautiful sunshine, and was reminded that God is a God of surprises and I am called to be thankful.

Where has God surprised or even delighted you in recent days? God shows up in unexpected ways, just as Jesus brought surprise and delight to the wedding at Cana. How might we open up our hearts and minds to receive the surprises and unexpected gifts that God graces upon us?

Professor Elisabeth Johnson, Lutheran Institute of Theology in Cameroon, in her commentary, notes that John doesn't call this act Jesus performs at the wedding a miracle, but rather a sign. Just like a road sign alerts us to what is ahead, a sign in scripture points us to what is coming down the road. This sign, changing water into wine, points us to the source of all life and joy. Wedding imagery is often used in scripture as a sign of restoration of Israel. Wine is a symbol of the joy and celebration connected with salvation. The abundance of wine reminds us of God's abundant love. Psalm 36 speaks of God's love. In verses 5-9, 'Your steadfast love, O Lord, extends to the heavens, your faithfulness to the clouds...How precious is your steadfast love, O God! All people may take refuge in the shadow of your wings. They feast on the abundance of your house, and you give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the fountain of life; in your light we see light.'

Christ points us to the abundance of joy that awaits us on the day of God's salvation. It is a joy not measured by human standards of wealth, comfort, never ending good health, or lack of suffering. Surprise and thankfulness – Jesus measures differently. God calls us, his beloved children into this abundant life through the power of the Holy Spirit and the gift of Jesus Christ, God's only Son.

We are about to embark on a new time in our ministry here at Zion, as Pr. Klafehn comes to us as our Intentional Interim. In his introductory letter this week, he shared that it will be a time of asking questions – Who are we? Who are our neighbors? What is God calling us to become? Let us be watchful of God's signs along this journey; watching for the surprises, paying attention to the snippets, and pondering with the wine steward how a new way or a new twist might bring about the abundance of God and bring us more fully into God's amazing love. Together, let us seek with hope and wonder what it is that God will do next through us. Amen.

ANTHEM: Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart, by Frederick C. Atkinson -Kelli Watson

APOSTLES' CREED, (Please stand, if able.)

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Prayers of Intercession

The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made.

By your Spirit, grant wisdom, knowledge, and discernment to those who hold leadership positions at any level. Direct policymakers toward compassionate decisions that build up safe and just communities. Lead all authorities in seeking and serving the common good. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

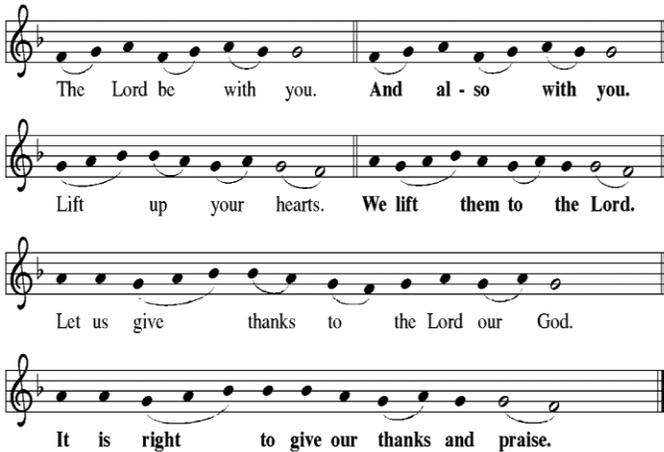
As Jesus provided generously in a moment of need, provide generous gifts of healing for those in need this day. Provide abundantly for all who are hungry or thirsty, all seeking shelter, and all who seek peace. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You see us for who we are and you delight in us. Embrace those struggling with self-worth, wrestling with self-identity, or facing significant life transition. Remind us that nothing can separate us from your love. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Listen to the cries of your people waiting patiently for your healing hand and comforting Spirit, especially those who suffer with chronic pain and all cancer patients, Pr. Mary Etta, Jackie and Skip, and Theresa, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

THE GREAT THANKSGIVING DIALOGUE



The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

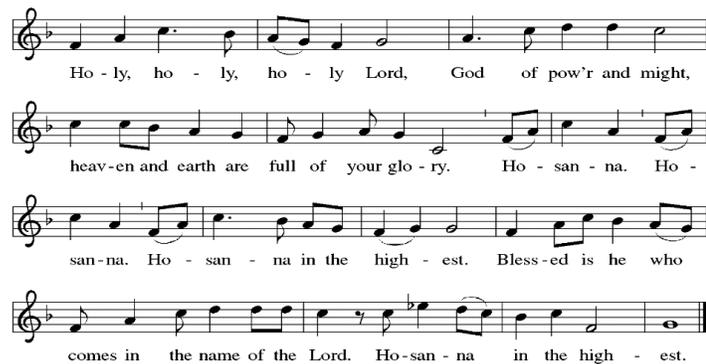
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy.... and join in their unending hymn.

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY



Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and might,
heav-en and earth are full of your glo - ry. Ho - san - na. Ho -
san-na. Ho - san - na in the high - est. Bless-ed is he who
comes in the name of the Lord. Ho-san - na in the high - est.

Thanksgiving at the Table

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all. In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me. Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory. Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all glory and honor, now and forever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION,

Come to God's table. There is a place for you and enough for all.

COMMUNION

The body of Christ, given for you. The blood of Christ, shed for you. **Amen.**

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We give you thanks, gracious God, for we have feasted on the abundance of your house. Send us to bring good news and to proclaim your favor to all, strengthened with the richness of your grace in your Son, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

SENDING

Blessing

God, who leads you in pathways of righteousness, who rejoices over you, and who calls you by name, bless your going out and your coming in, today and forever. **Amen.**

Sending Song: *Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized, vs. 1 & 4 Hymn#304 -Kelli Watson*

Vs. 1 Christ, when for us you were baptized, God's Spirit on you came, as peaceful as a dove, and yet as urgent as a flame, as urgent as a flame.

Vs. 4 Baptize us with your Spirit, Lord; your cross on us be signed, that likewise in God's service we may perfect freedom find, may perfect freedom find.

Dismissal

Go with Christ into a weary world. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude: *Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing, arr. by Harold DeCou -Kelli Watson*

If you would like to send a personal note of appreciation and thanks to Pastor Anita, please bring your cards to church with you this Sunday and we will deliver them!! If you do not plan on attending the service this week, you can send your cards directly to Pastor Anita Mohr at:

Our Saviour Lutheran Church

1640 Genesee St.

Utica, NY 13502

WARM 
WINTER
Wishes 