

3 Advent Leadership Letter – December 13, 2020

To our Zion family:

A friend recently sent me a beautiful and moving piece of music, The Redemption Song, arranged by the Kanneh-Mason family. All the musicians in this YouTube video are members of the same family. If you have access to YouTube, I encourage you to listen to this twice: once with your eyes open to take in the expressions of the musicians, the second time with eyes closed to let the music wash over you and fill you up. I hope you might be as moved by this as I was, and have been, in the numerous times I've listened and watched since receiving the gift from my friend. Here's the link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k_LmRcr8Mm4

Announcements and updates:

-Our worship this Sunday will again be offered in three ways: remotely via Zoom, livestreamed on Facebook, or by using the printed Service of the Word, which you will find later in this mailing.

-To join **this Sunday's service via Zoom**, same log-in info as last week:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwSTBER2lNlO1Qzd6WGxDdz09> Meeting ID: 843-5484 0714, Password: 022654. Or by PHONE, 6465588656, 84354840714#, 1#, 022654# US. If you would prefer to **view the service via livestream on our YouTube channel**, you can do so by visiting our page at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWzOtbCe2z7-bIPvxp62lA>.

-In her sermon this past Sunday, Rev. Jen DeWeerth implored us to "scan the horizon for you (Jesus) as we wait and hope." Two Sundays ago, in Rev. Janet's sermon, she encouraged us to look for the signs of hope around us during this Advent season. In the week ahead, we encourage you to look for these signs of hope and share them during the "joyful chaos" that follows each Sunday's Zoom service. We can all benefit and be uplifted with these reminders all around us.

-The **next in-person worship service is scheduled for Dec. 20th**. We know that the **current COVID-19 related statistics for Oneida County**, along with virtually every location across the United States, have increased at alarming rates and will continue to rise due to Thanksgiving weekend visits. Our Task Force is monitoring the Oneida County numbers and will be making a recommendation to the church council about the Dec. 20th service before the next council meeting on Dec. 14th. At present, it does not look promising to hold the Dec. 20th service as in-person, but we will keep the congregation apprised as we draw closer to that date.

-Our **Christmas Eve service will take place at 8:00 PM via Zoom**, with Pastor Janet Hoover presiding. The Zoom log-in instructions will be included in next week's Leadership Letter. Please join us and invite your extended family! Wear something red if you can. We'll ask the kids to show us their Christmas stockings during the joyful chaos.

-The **next Church Council meeting** will take place via Zoom on Dec. 14th.

-The **2021 budget process** is well underway. Many thanks to Wendy Stevens, Gloria Cifonelli, Ed Grove, Patti Cappelli, and all committee chairs who submitted estimates for 2021 budget expenses. Preparing the budget is a tedious project and we appreciate the time and effort each of these fellow congregants are investing to generate the budget that helps us carry out Zion's mission.

-If you have not yet returned **your 2021 Stewardship Pledge Cards and volunteer sheet**, we ask that you do so ASAP, as this information will assist greatly in generating an accurate budget for next year.

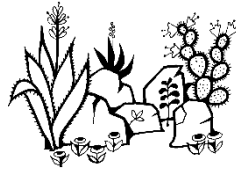
-We are approaching the **last week for donations to Christmas Food Baskets**.

-We are making one **last call for volunteers for our church council**. Please consider volunteering for one of these important leadership positions. If you are interested, please contact one of the following council members: Jeanne Gymburch (jgymburch@aol.com), Kim Ritchie (kimritchieus@yahoo.com), Michele Lasher (michlsh@aol.com), or Mark Thompson (mdthompsonphd@gmail.com).

Rev. Jennifer DeWeerth began this past Sunday's service with a reflection on the first reading, found in Isaiah 40: 1-11. Jen encouraged us to take time this week to read the hopeful message found in this passage. "You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!"¹¹ He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young." This week let us look for the signs of hope that surround us if we just look for them. Once found, let us share this hope with everyone around us through our words and our deeds.

Wishing you hope and peace in this Advent season! Mark Thompson and Kristen Burson, church council co-presidents

3 Advent



SERVICE OF THE WORD
GATHERING

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, whose forgiveness is sure and whose steadfast love endures forever.

Amen.

Together let us honestly and humbly confess that we have not lived as God desires.

Loving and forgiving God,

We confess that we are held captive by sin. In spite of our best efforts, we have gone astray. We have not welcomed the stranger; we have not loved our neighbor; we have not been Christ to one another. Restore us, O God. Wake us up and turn us from our sin. Renew us each day in the light of Christ. Amen.

People of God, hear this glad news: by God's endless grace your sins are forgiven, and you are free—free from all that holds you back and free to live in the peaceable realm of God. May you be strengthened in God's love, comforted by Christ's peace, and accompanied with the power of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn *Prepare the Royal Highway #264, Verses 1 & 4* –Mary Senn

Vs. 1 Prepare the royal highway; the King of kings is near! Let ev'ry hill and valley a level road appear!

Then greet the King of glory, foretold in sacred story: Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!

Vs. 4 His is no earthly kingdom; it comes from heav'n above. His rule is peace and freedom and justice, truth, and love. So let your praise be sounding for kindness so abounding: Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the words of your prophets, that, anointed by your Spirit, we may testify to your light; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

ADVENT INVOCATION *John Blackburn*

The prophets not only proclaimed that God would send his Son into the world, but they also foretold the rejoicing that would accompany his coming. The hearts of men, women, and children were filled with joy and gladness as the realization of his promise drew near.

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

THE LIGHTING OF THE FIRST, SECOND, AND THIRD ADVENT CANDLES

(light two purple candles & one pink candle) *Jim & Kim Marscher*

Today we relight the Candle of Expectation, recalling God's promise to send a Savior to his people. As we relight the Candle of Preparation, we remember how John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus. Now as we light the Candle of Proclamation, our hearts are filled with joy as we proclaim that his advent will soon take place.

THE HYMN: *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel #257 (verse 3)*

Oh, come, O come, O Lord of might,
as to your tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times you gave the law
in cloud, and majesty, and awe.

Refrain

Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

THE PRAYER

John Blackburn

Blessed are you, O Lord our God, ruler of the universe. Your prophets spoke of a day when the desert would blossom, and waters would break forth in the wilderness. Bless us as we light the candles on the wreath. Strengthen our hearts as we prepare for the coming of the Lord. May he give water to all who thirst, for he is our light and salvation. Blessed be God forever.

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

Gospel: John 1:6-8, 19-28

Sermon: *Advent and Christmas* -Pr. Janet Hoover

What a wonderful time of year. Even in the midst of pandemic worries and political tension we smile just a little more often, enjoy special decorations and foods. It is a time to remember and to anticipate, to reflect and celebrate. Actually, Christmas is not one event. We participate in three sorts of Christmases. The most obvious glitters with festivity. This Sparkle Christmas begins sometime after Halloween, and unless you are a hermit, it is impossible to avoid. Sparkle Christmas is mistletoe and holly, chestnuts roasting on an open fire, and stockings hung by the chimney with care. It is eggnog and fruitcakes, Frosty the Snowman, and Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. Sparkle Christmas is fun, bringing—well—sparkle into the gray reality of work and responsibility. Then there is the Starglow Christmas. This Christmas is rooted in the story of stories. Its center is a stable and shepherds keeping watch. “Away in a Manger” and “Silent Night.” We experience it in candlelight and the hush of starlight, in the familiar words of Scripture “to you is born this day”. Starglow Christmas is probably the one that means the most to us, uniting us for just a moment in something deeper and greater than ourselves. This is the Christmas we long for, the one that stirs memories and the one we want to hand down to our children. Sparkle and Starglow bring a smile to the most jaded curmudgeon. They sustain us when times are tough. They remind us that there is more to life than stale routines and trouble. They fill our spirits with blessing and touch the broken and dried out places in our lives with warmth and joy. But they are only a part of the Christmas story. There is a third aspect to the good news proclaimed by the angels—an aspect of God’s love that we, sitting in our comfortable homes, may want to ignore. Did you really listen to the scripture reading from gospel? Oh, it starts with God and it ends with God, but in the middle everything shifts and changes and the world is turned upside down and inside out. Listen once more—this time from *The Message*:

What God has done for me will never be forgotten, the God whose very name is holy, set apart from all others. His mercy flows in wave after wave on those who are in awe before him. He bared his arm and showed his strength, scattered the bluffing braggarts. He knocked tyrants off their high horses, pulled victims out of the mud. The starving poor sat down to a banquet; the callous rich were left out in the cold. He embraced his child. He remembered and piled on the mercies, piled them high. It’s exactly what he promised, beginning with Abraham and right up to now.

This is the Christmas message. Christmas is sparkle and starglow, but it is also the awesome presence of God entering into our world. It is the creator of heaven and earth challenging injustice, shattering earthly tyranny, knocking down walls of greed and hate. This song of shifting gears is so powerful that there are places in Central America where it is forbidden to read it in public, for its rising and falling notes move everyone from their “place” to God’s place. Here we see the nobodies raised and those who think they have it all together, those surest of themselves and their abilities and their power, shattered. Clarence Jordan writes it this way:

With his strong-arm God scatters the big boys who think they’re somebody. He pulls thrones from under the royalty and gives dignity to the lowly. He loads the hungry with good things, but the rich he lets go with nothing at all. Mindful of mercy, he gives a lift to his people. In stark and uncompromising language, we hear of the hungry fed while those who have wealth and hoard it, those who have food and will not share it, those who have influence and will not use it for all—are left empty and lost.

Mary’s song calls us to celebrate a third sort of Christmas—one where the carols of hope don’t die out on December 26, but continue to wind their way through the world. To celebrate this Christmas of shifting gears is to work for a world where the hungry are fed, the oppressed are freed from the heavy burdens they carry, where everyone is protected, where everyone is wanted and valued and loved. Mary’s song calls us to see the world from a different place, to shift gears for a time, to slow down and see the wounded men and women who inhabit this planet with us. To turn from our paths of accomplishment and accumulation, to walk beside them, to listen to their pain, share their grief, open our hands and hearts to their need. God’s goodness is blazing a trail across the heavens, and we can become part of it, or we can be swept away by its glory. This is a text of good news for all who suffer and struggle, all who long for a world where there is food and clean water and medicine and shelter for all. A song of hope and joy sung by one who has no reason to hope or rejoice. Here stands this Mary What’s her name, from the wrong side of the tracks, with no education, no standing in the community, the one who has become the object of gossip and ridicule—here stands this bedraggled peasant girl singing a song of such hope and confidence that it takes my breath away. Mary sings a song on behalf of all those who have never known a full stomach. She

sings a song for all who, in their poverty and their wretchedness, still believe that God will make a way where there seems to be no way. Can Mary's God who acts on behalf of the poor and downtrodden truly be our Lord and our God? How can the God who overturns the way the world works, who elects the least and the last to bring in the kingdom, have anything good to say to us—we who even in this time of stress and anxiety still have so much? This Advent passage confronts us with a tough question: Can we sing along with Mary? Can we sing Mary's song in the voting booths, in the ways we spend our money, in the way we speak and think about our neighbor? It's hard, isn't it? For it may mean giving up some of our comfort, our ideas of the way the world should work. Mary sings to a people, oppressed by politics and religion, of a day when they will know God's love and grace. She sings to people locked in dark superstition of a day when the doors of fear will burst open and they will walk with heads held high. She sings to slaves stooped and bent under the whip of a day when they will know freedom. She sings to children weeping as bombs burst over their beds of a day when the lullaby of peace will rock them to sleep. She sings to refugees far from all that is familiar of a day when they will be home again. And, yes, Mary sings to us—she sings to the child who struggles in school, the teenager who stands in the shadows longing to fit in but knowing that they never will, the parent who wants to make everything right for their children and has to watch helplessly as they make mistakes and lose their way, those who look at the stack of bills and the rapidly shrinking bank account with fear and frustration, the health care workers whose energy is depleted, the teachers who struggle to engage children whose lives are turning upside down. She sings to those who live each day with regrets over the past, those who see the world changing so rapidly that they feel like strangers in their own time. Mary sings a song of hope and promise. A poet writes...

Fear not, God's joy is in the air. God's grace astounds. God's love surrounds this sinful, hurting world. Fear not, you weeping child, God came to set you free. Fear not, you who hunger for God's presence, who long for the peace that comes from being home. God's grace astounds. God's love abounds for all of you. Fear not when questions come: How can I know God's way? Can God change me today? For in Christ's birth, God touched the earth. Christ saves, forgives, and guides. Fear not when you are distracted and distressed, Christ comes and we are blest.

Mary's song speaks of a day when the priorities of the world will shift from self to others, from me and mine to God's. Its words may come hard to our lips. We may stammer and stutter, but as we begin to make them a part of who we are, Christmas will happen. Christmas is sparkle and glitter, it is fun and celebration. Christmas is star glow and angel choruses. It is the hush of worship and zooming with friends. But even more, Christmas is the time when Christ comes into our midst to wipe away the tears, to lift up those beaten down by pain and suffering, to call us all to love and serve in his name. Through Christ, God turns the barrenness of our lives into fertile ground for the growth of new life. The astounding good news is that as we let grace dwell in us, as we trust in God's love so much that we turn every part of our lives over to God, as we sing with Mary, each one of us becomes God's vessel of redemption in the world. Each one of us will give birth to God's love. Like Mary we too are the bearers of the Word-made-flesh. We carry within us a song of joy and courage, waiting to be poured out into all the world. As you make phone calls and wave to your neighbors, as you serve on committees and wear your masks, you bring Christ's love into the lives of those around you. Wherever you are, your words and your actions make a difference, for through them, Christ's love takes shape and the world will be made new. May your souls magnify the Lord, and your spirits rejoice in God your Savior. For God has looked with favor on you, and all generations will call you blessed. For the Mighty One has done great things for you, and holy is God's name.

Apostles' Creed

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.

ANTHEM Lullaby on a Basque Carol -arr. Mary Senn

Prayers of Intercession

God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for everyone in need.

God of preachers and messengers, you have entrusted your church with the work of proclaiming good news. Strengthen the witness of bishops, pastors, deacons, church musicians, lay leaders, and all people who contribute

their prayers and talents to public worship at Zion Lutheran Church. Embed your word in their hearts. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of exiles and wanderers, you repair what was once destroyed. We pray for people who have been displaced from their homes by fire, flood, earthquake, or storm. Support the work of Lutheran World Relief, Lutheran Disaster Response, and all disaster relief organizations in their recovery efforts. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of the powerful and helpless, you clothe us with strength when our spirits are weak and weary. Bestow your spirit upon this congregation and empower us to comfort the people who turn to us in times of need. Make your church a place of refuge and healing. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

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, Gail, comfort for Norm, Bill & Rusty, Don & Wanda, healing and strength for Richard (Sara Silva's dad), Skip, John P., Julie, Esther & Bill, healing for Tom, Edween Ham, healing for Jim, healing for Elinor, Claudia and Fran, Edie Marie, Suzee, prayers for Michael Gilleece and family, Your Neighbors clients, Theresa, and our country, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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.

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.

Closing Hymn: *Christ, Be Our Light #715, Verses 1 & 2 -Mary Senn*

Vs. 1 Longing for light, we wait in darkness. Longing for truth, we turn to you. Make us your own, your holy people, light for the world to see. Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.

Vs. 2 Longing for peace, our world is troubled. Longing for hope, many despair. Your word alone has pow'r to save us. Make us your living voice. Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your church gathered today.

Blessing

The Creator of the stars bless your Advent waiting, the long-expected Savior fill you with love, the unexpected Spirit guide your journey, now and forever.

Dismissal

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

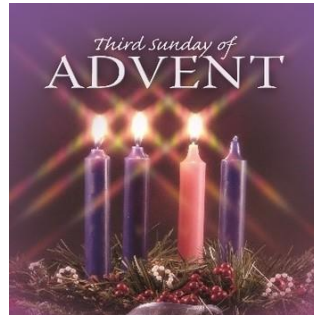
Each snowflake that falls has a message of Love, Hope, and Peace.



We invite your continued prayers for members of our Zion family; Fran and Claudia King, Norm and Patsy Glista, and Rusty and Bill Pentland. Bill and Rusty are currently together in St. Luke's Hospital. Cards and notes of encouragement can be sent to the Pentland's at: 2160 Bleecker St. Apt. B130, Utica, NY 13501

THE 2021 OFFERING ENVELOPES are available and are located in the downstairs coatroom. Please call the office at 315.732.4110 ahead of time for pick-up. Any questions, call Gloria Cifonelli at 315.735.8077.

ANNUAL REPORT: Please submit your reports between now and January 4th. Thank you!!



The Third Sunday of Advent

...And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn... Luke 2:6-7

Lord, you have given us so much to look forward to this Christmas. In many ways, it's like any other year, but the special time of Jesus' birth is still just as amazing as it was on that first Christmas Day. The time has come for us, Lord, to see the coming of Jesus in such a humble manner and know that he comes to us today in humble ways as well. Ordinary, earthly, a human, he came to meet us in our sinful circumstances. That is extraordinary! Amen!

Daily Prayers for Advent

Advent Booklets...

You are welcome to stop by the church to select an Advent booklet from the display of devotional materials on the dresser by the front door. Please give Sara a call or leave a message at 315-732-4110 to let her know when you will be coming. You may also call or email Sara at office@zionluth.com to request that one be sent to you.



CHRISTMAS AT THE LUTHERAN HOME

Please consider donating...

Blankets, lap robes, or gifts of money that will be used to give the residents gift certificates to have their hair done or to purchase items from the Corner Store on Wheels. Checks should be made out to "Friends of the Lutheran Home" with "for resident use" on the memo line. Shirley Carlson is preparing the box, which will be in the downstairs coatroom. This year, NO toiletries are being accepted. Please call ahead 315-732-4110 to drop off your donations. Deadline for donations is December 14th **Thank you!!**



FAIR TRADE ITEMS ARE AVAILABLE FOR CHRISTMAS GIFTS!!!

Zion's Fair Trade Hutch in the Fireside Room has been replenished with plenty of organic food items, just in time for safe, last minute holiday shopping.

A few of our offerings:

- Mind, Body & Soul coffee, both whole bean and drip
- Dark Chocolate Caramel Crunch with Sea Salt Bars
- Dark Chocolate Almond Bars
- Chocolate Chips
- Extra Virgin Olive Oil from Palestine
- Cashews, both Natural and Roasted/Salted
- Green Tea with Ginger and Vanilla Rooibos Tea

Shopping by appointment, curbside pick-up, and home delivery are all possibilities. Just call or text Laurel McCurdy at (315) 939-9875 or email her at lemccurdy@gmail.com

Thank you for supporting this ministry of Zion Lutheran Church!



Peanut Butter Balls, *A special holiday recipe provided by chef Jon!*



Prep Time: 20 minutes, Yield: 60 balls, Method: No Bake

Ingredients:

- 1 cup creamy peanut butter
- 1 cup butter, room temperature
- 4 cups powdered sugar
- 1 1/4 cups crushed graham crackers
- 15 ounces semi-sweet chocolate (for melting)

Instructions

1. In the bowl of your stand mixer fitted with the paddle attachment, combine the peanut butter and butter, mixing on medium speed until smooth.
2. Turn mixer to low and add in the powdered sugar and graham cracker crumbs, mixing until evenly incorporated. Mixture will be thick.
3. Using a small cookie scoop (about 1 tablespoon), portion out the mixture and roll into balls. Place them on a large parchment lined baking sheet. Place the baking sheet in the refrigerator for at least 30 minutes to chill.
4. In a medium bowl, melt the chocolate in 25- second increments, stirring after each until smooth.
5. Using a fork, dip each peanut butter ball into the melted chocolate, tapping off the excess. Place back on the parchment lined baking sheet. Repeat with all balls.
6. Drizzle any extra chocolate on top of the balls.
7. Allow the chocolate to set before storing.

If you can't remember my name, just say "chocolate"... I'll turn around.

175+ Years of Christmas Trees at Zion

We take pride in the fact that our founder, Pastor Andrew Wetzel, introduced the German custom of beautifying church naves with Christmas trees, a tradition that spread throughout Central New York.

Wetzel arrived upstate in 1832 and soon established several Lutheran missions. He settled in Verona and, at holiday time in a humble meetinghouse, the pastor and his wife, Elizabeth, set up the first Christmas tree used in our region's houses of worship. This occurred in 1833 or 1834.

German immigration brought rapid growth to Wetzel's Utica mission, and the congregation built a church at the intersection of Columbia and Huntington Streets in 1844. The structure was dedicated in September. A Christmas tree probably adorned the chancel three months later.

Why "probably?" First, no records of that Yuletide celebration exist. Second, later sources date the first Christmas tree to 1845 or 1846. These testimonies, however, were recorded decades after the event occurred. Logic dictates that 1844 is correct.

Before erecting a church, Wetzel's flock worshipped wherever they could find space. Newspaper accounts stated that Zion's Christmas trees were used in "a room above a drug store" and in "rooms atop the Hamlin building." The latter structure stands at the corner of Varick and Columbia Streets.

Our congregation has heralded Christmas with decorative trees, in the German tradition, since the 1830s. We can be proud of this heritage as we wish everyone, "Merry Christmas!" Or, as Pastor Wetzel would have emoted, "Fröhliche Weihnachten!"



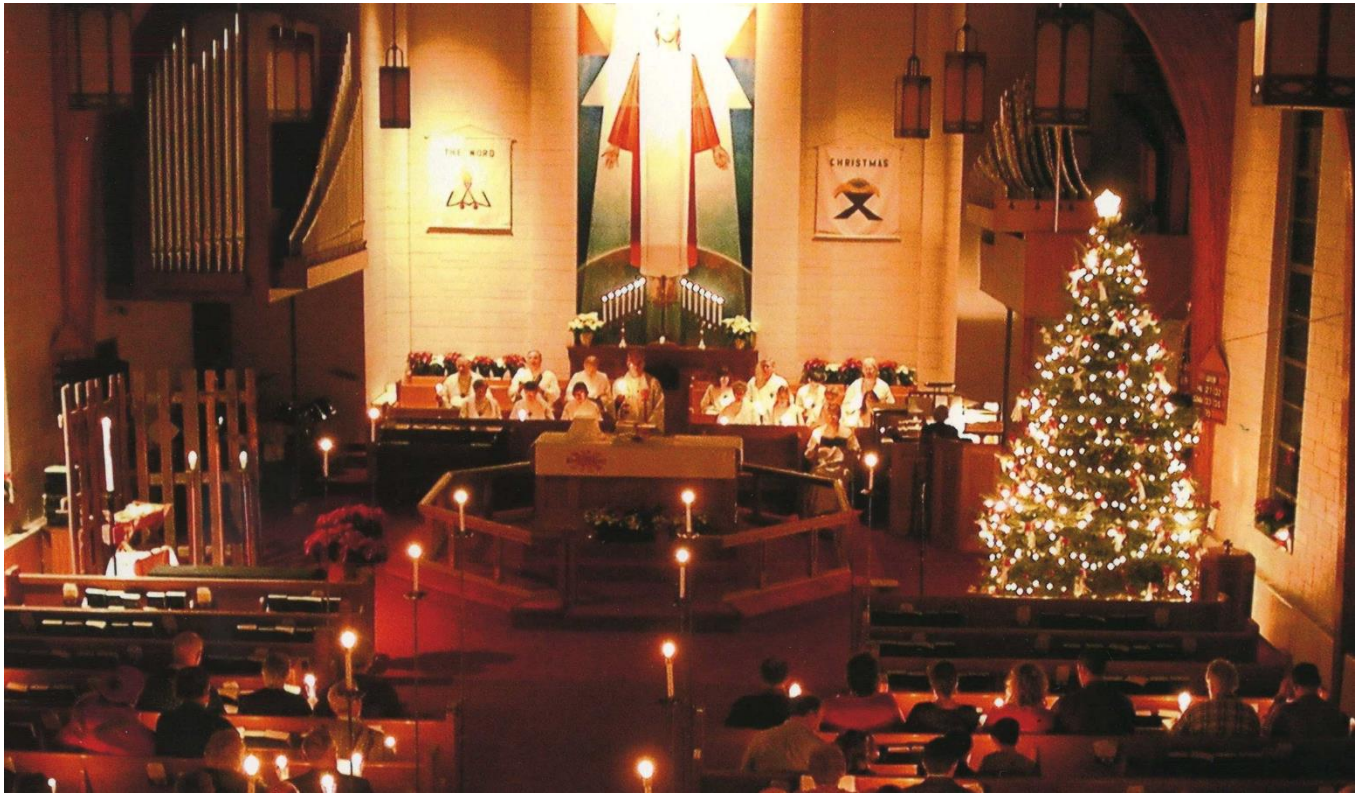
Wreaths atop the chancel arches complemented Old Zion's Christmas tree in 1944.



The Hamlin building, Columbia and Varick, may have witnessed Utica's first Christmas tree in a house of worship.

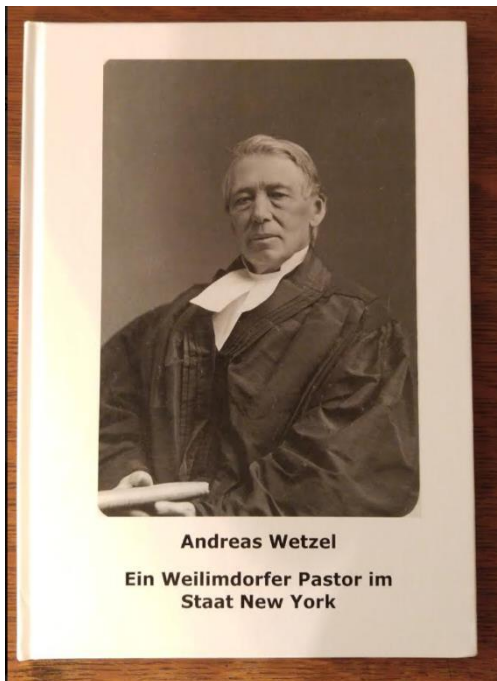


Two enormous Christmas trees stood in the chancel in the early 1960s. The evergreens were donated by the Ansbachs, Pastor John Sprock's brother and sister-in-law, who owned land in Hawkinsville.



A Christmas "tree of lights" brightens Zion's candlelight service, 2000.

Biography of Andrew Wetzel to be Released Soon



Julia "Jewels" Krauss informed Zion via email that her biography of our founding pastor, Johann Andreas (Andrew) Wetzel, will be published shortly. Our archives provided Julia with a goodly amount of source material for the book. Particularly useful was Pastor William C. Nolte's history of the church, published in English and German in 1922.

You may recall that Julia, an actress from Toronto, spoke at our 175th anniversary service in 2017. She is a direct descendant of Pastor Wetzel, and her family has long been interested in his past. Julia's grandfather, Helmut Maier, included information about the pastor in a history of Weilimdort, Germany - Wetzel, Maier, and Julia's hometown.

Zion will receive two copies of the book, plus a translation, which Julia promises to send us by February.

To Julia Krauss, we proudly say - "Congratulations and danke schoen!"