

7 Easter– May 16, 2021

To our Zion family,

In her sermon last weekend based on John's gospel (15: 9-17), Rev. Jen reminded us of some of the work ahead as the restrictions of the pandemic begin to lift and we look to re-engage with one another face-to-face. Our challenge, our opportunity, in her words, is to *"build back supportive, strong communities. You become friends by befriending. You strengthen neighborhoods by neighboring. Jesus says, "Do these commandments, these things I am telling you to do, so that you will love one another." We become the disciples he asks us to be by doing the things he shows us, the things he commands us to do. We become the noun (e.g.–friends, neighborhoods) by doing the verb (e.g.–befriending, neighboring)." In the week ahead, let us share love by continuing to be loving-toward one another, our neighbors, and especially to the lonely or those who might be difficult for us to love.*

Announcements and updates:

-We know there have been audio problems for those on the Zoom screen when offering the Sunday service as a hybrid model (in-person in the sanctuary while also broadcasting via Zoom and live streamed on YouTube). Several Zion staff and congregants have been working to resolve the issues. We appreciate your patience.

-**This Sunday's worship service will be offered remotely** via Zoom, live streamed (via YouTube), the printed Service of the Word (found later in this letter), and afterward on Zion's Facebook page (insert link). The May 30th service will also be remote, as will June 13th (with Pastor Eldon DeWeerth presiding from Chicago).

-The next in-person worship service (also broadcast via Zoom) will be **May 23rd, Pentecost Sunday**. Whether you plan to attend in-person or remotely, **please wear RED!**

-**To join the May 16th service by Zoom:**

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwvSTBER2lNb1o1Qzd6WGxDdz09> Meeting ID: 843-5484 0714, Password: 022654. Or by PHONE, +16465588656, 84354840714#, 1#, 022654#. If you are joining us on Zoom, please be sure you are on mute and that your video is turned off from 10 AM when the service commences until it ends and the "Joyful Chaos" begins.

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

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWzOtfCe2z7-bIPvxp62lA>

-This year's **Synod Assembly** will take on June 3-5, remotely via Zoom. The Assembly will address a number of important issues, including the election of our next bishop. Laurel McCurdy and Mark Thompson will be representing Zion at the Assembly.

-Zion hosts the next **Red Cross Blood Drive** this Saturday, May 15th from 9:30-2PM in the Fellowship Hall. Donors are asked to schedule a designated appointment. Please wear masks. Safety protocols will continue to be followed. The sponsor code to schedule an appointment is ZionLutheran and the direct link to schedule an appointment is: <https://www.redcrossblood.org/give.html/drive-results?zipSponsor=ZionLutheran>. *Thank you!*

-The **church council met on May 10** for its monthly meeting. Agenda items included our plan to find ways to connect with the Our Saviour congregation, the status of the call process, Zion's lease agreements with our two tenants in the parsonage, and a number of issues related to Worship and Music, including our Sunday worship service and other requests for use of our church (e.g.–weddings, baptisms, and memorial services).

-27 members of our congregation provided **feedback on the Sunday services**. Thank you! While the majority of feedback was positive and supportive, we did receive ideas for improvement, which we will look to implement, as

possible. (Some feedback directly contradicts the opinions of others, especially re: the pace of reopening. We won't be able to make everyone happy.) The task of the organizing and providing the Sunday service has fallen to a small group of dedicated volunteers who have been taken this on for more than a year without a full-time pastor. It involves far more than you might imagine. If you have ideas and would be willing to help implement them, please contact Lauren, Mark, or Jim Marscher (chair of Worship and Music). The pandemic has made this a real challenge! We remain committed to making Sunday morning worship accessible to as many as possible, and will continue to offer services remotely for those unable to be in the sanctuary in-person for any number of reasons.

-Our **Call Committee** continues to work through the process of considering candidates forwarded to them by the Synod. The process is a confidential one to respect the positions of those expressing interest. We will share information when possible. Thanks for your patience with the process. While we all look forward to having a new pastor in place, it's most important that this be the right person and the process not rushed for convenience sake.

-While the pandemic has presented many challenges, both large and small, there have been positive developments. One has been **the opportunity for our Zion congregation to interact more frequently with the Our Saviour congregation** (e.g.—Lenten mid-week services, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and bible study). Even after the pandemic restrictions begin lifting, the leadership of both hope to continue to build our relationship, find opportunities to collaborate and share resources. **We are forming a committee to develop a plan for fostering this relationship.** If you are interested in participating, please contact Laurel.

-Thank you for the continued support of our Zion mission through your stewardship contributions of time and funds.

-With our in-person Sunday services returning to the regular weekly schedule starting after June 13th, we would like offer transportation to those in need. We have **an opening for a driver to provide transportation on Sunday mornings.** If you are interested, please contact Nancy Thompson (nthomps@hamilton.edu) or call Sara in the office (315-732-4110).

At last Sunday's service, Kelli Watson played one of the favorite hymn for so many of us, *I Love to Tell the Story*. While you may know the words by heart, here they are for you to sing aloud by yourself at home, or with your family:

*I love to tell the story of unseen things above, of Jesus and his glory, of Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story because I know 'tis true. It satisfies my longings as nothing else can do.
I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory, to tell the old, old story, of Jesus and his love.
I love to tell the story for those who know it best, seem hungering and thirsting to hear it like the rest.
And when, in scenes of glory, I sing the new, new song, 'twill be the old, old story that I have loved so long.
I love to tell the story, 'twill be my theme in glory, to tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love,
To tell the old, old story of Jesus and his love.*

If you have access to YouTube, you may want to watch/listen to this hymn and sing along. Here's your chance to sing a duet with Alan Jackson! The link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OrCpKa_xOcE.

Wishing you all a safe and healthy week ahead!
Mark Thompson, church council co-president



WELCOME

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

Alleluia! Christ is risen.

Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!

Refreshed by the resurrection life we share in Christ, let us give thanks for the gift of baptism.

We thank you, risen Christ, for these waters where you make us new, leading us from death to life, from tears to joy. We bless you, risen Christ, that your Spirit comes to us in the grace-filled waters of rebirth, like rains to our thirsting earth, like streams that revive our souls, like cups of cool water shared with strangers. Breathe your peace on your church when we hide in fear. Clothe us with your mercy and forgiveness. Send us companions on our journey as we share your life. Make us one, risen Christ. Cleanse our hearts. Shower us with life. To you be given all praise, with the Holy Spirit, in the glory of God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn: *Come Now, O Prince of Peace vs. 1&4 Hymn #247 –Kelli Watson*

Vs. 1 Come now, O prince of peace, make us one body. Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile your people.

Vs. 4 Come, Hope of unity, make us one body. Come, O Lord Jesus, reconcile all nations.

Prayer of the Day

Gracious and glorious God, you have chosen us as your own, and by the powerful name of Christ you protect us from evil. By your Spirit transform us and your beloved world, that we may find our joy in your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: Acts 1:15-17, 21-26

Second Reading: 1 John 5:

Gospel: John 17:6-19

Sermon: *-Pastor Janet Hoover*

Choosing leaders is never easy—even as we continue to rehash the last presidential campaign, we are already thinking about the next one. And how many times when you go into the voting booth are you confused by the names on the slate? Do you vote for the incumbent? Do you vote for the newcomer? How about voting a straight party line? Elections, search committees, nominating committees—think how much time and energy and money goes in to filling leadership positions at all levels of our world. Our scripture lesson this morning describes a time early in the life of the church as the disciples' wrestle with this very issue. Twelve disciples had followed Jesus. They had worked together, served together, grieved together. Twelve disciples—representing the twelve tribes of Israel. Then the unthinkable happened. One of their number had betrayed Jesus to the authorities, and then in a fit of remorse had committed suicide, leaving them with a leadership gap. Twelve is a significant number and they know that a replacement is needed. And so Peter opened the floor for nominations. The only requirement, Peter said, was that the person needed to be someone who was completely familiar with what Jesus had done. And so those gathered put forward two names—Barsabbas and Matthias. This is where the story takes an unusual twist. Barsabbas and Matthias didn't go around and put up posters or signs. They didn't take out ads on television or in the newspaper. There were no telephone polls or public debates. Instead, once those two were nominated, the church prayed, and then decided between them by casting lots. Now the Bible doesn't tell us exactly what casting lots involved, but it probably involved a process of inscribing names on parchment or pieces of wood, placing them in a bowl, and shaking the bowl until one of the names fell out. There was no discussion of the merits of the candidates, No one volunteered for the job. Instead, they believed that through this process, God would show them the person God wanted to be the new apostle.

As far as I know, the only denomination that still operates this way is the Amish church. None of the churches I have served would ever consider this approach. But I have read about a church in Washington D.C. that does something similar. Each year at their annual meeting, they list up on a board all the leadership positions that are needed for that congregation. Then they put the names of all of the active church members in a hat. They pray and then they begin pulling names out of the hat, and that is how people are chosen. We may cringe a bit at that. It carries with it an air of chance that makes us uncomfortable. It's easy to say we trust God, but this? We tend to be more comfortable trying to control the process of leadership selection by human means. Yet as much as I value and cherish my right to vote, there are times when this sort of process has a definite appeal. For in this approach, serving is a matter of placing ourselves in God's hands to do God's work. Rather than building resumes for the sake of impressing others, those chosen...well, they might actually depend on the Spirit. Back to Acts...those gathered read the name Matthias, the torch of apostleship was passed to him, and then—actually he is never mentioned again. A few of the disciples—Peter, James, John—seem to have had a more active press agent, but the majority of the apostles seem to have just gone—quietly and faithfully—about the work of teaching, baptizing, starting communities of faith. For the church grows and thrives and bears the kind of fruit that comes not from the work of one or two, but from a network of people inspired by the love of Christ, encouraged by the Spirit, committed to loving others in Christ's name, caring for the neighbor lying wounded in the ditch. The story of Matthias is important because it reminds us that it is God who calls us into discipleship. God who chooses. God who equips. God who works in and through us. We may not remember the name Matthias, but God does. And it is through the often unrecognized, un-applauded work of ordinary men and women that God's purpose is served. As we look back through the pages of history, we can trace the light of love moving through the mists of time. At times the shadows have threatened to engulf its glow, but never has it disappeared. Through the centuries men and women have heard God's call to service and have responded with joy and courage, placing their gifts and talents, time and energy before God. Some of those carrying the torch are well-known: Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Mother Theresa. But as important their part has been, it is the countless unsung Christians who through quiet faithfulness have kept the light alive—ordinary men and women who have preached Christ by their lives of loving service. Preachers may preach sermons till the cows come home, theologians compose brilliant treatises, but the love of Christ is passed on through the work you do. Your name is being called to join the ranks of those who have experienced the wonder of being loved by God, and who have the mission of proclaiming that love to our broken world—offering hope to those hungry for meaning and purpose, sharing goodness and joy with those thirsty for love.

Carrying the light of Christ's love into the world is more than simply being concerned about the world, it is acting in the ways that Christ taught us. Being concerned is seeing something awful happening to someone and thinking, wow, that's too bad. Concern often leads to a lot of talk, a lot of handwringing, and not a lot of action. Or as someone once wrote: Everybody sees a job to be done and is sure that Somebody will do it. Anybody could have done it, but Nobody did. Somebody got angry about that, because it was Everybody's job. Everybody thought that Anybody could do it, but Nobody realized that Everybody wouldn't do it. It ended up that Everybody blamed Somebody when Nobody did what Anybody could have. And the hungry still cry out for bread, the lonely still yearn for someone to know their name. Compassion, on the other hand, is seeing something awful happening to someone and saying: I can't let that happen to my brother, my sister—and then doing something about it. So, who is called to step up and say, Here I am? In your baptisms you have been chosen—marked as God's own. You have work to do. It may not be work you would select for yourself. It may involve caring for the very person you find it the hardest to love or taking on some new avenue of service for which you feel unprepared. It means risking security and comfort to reach out to the homeless, the dying, the lonely and forgotten. It means speaking out when you would prefer to retreat into the safety of silence, forgiving one who has hurt you, accepting new responsibilities when all you want to do is retreat into your comfort zone. We may question our abilities, our strength. What if we go where God sends us and we fail? What if we look foolish? What if nobody understands? What if we lose everything? And let's face it, often we just plain don't want to take the call. We're afraid, for in the presence and power of God everything we ever thought we knew about the world, everything we ever thought we knew about our work and our way of life, everything we ever thought we knew about ourselves—everything seems insignificant, inadequate, ineffective. Surely someone else is more worthy—more spiritual—more holy. Surely someone else is smarter, braver, more capable. And we allow our fears and doubts to hold us back. When I think about all those things God might ask of me, I will admit that I'm reminded of an experience I had while traveling with a youth group to Dallas. As a final “fun” activity after a week of serving the homeless community of the city, we spent an afternoon at Six Flags Theme Park. The kids had a great time, and I was content to be the designated backpack holder while they rode the rides. Then we came to Shockwave—a ride which not only moved you up and down and

around curves but rotated you upside down not once, not twice, but three times. As the group got in line, the pressure mounted—everyone else had ridden at least one roller coaster. Now it was my turn. The kids urged. They pushed. They called my name. The challenge was issued. It was time for me to demonstrate that my faith was greater than my fear. It is my observation that there are three approaches to roller coasters. One is—

There is absolutely no way, no amount of money, nothing you can say that would ever get me to set one foot in that car. The second approach is one of great exhilaration. These folks prefer the very first car where with eyes wide open and hands raised in the air they whoop and shout with excitement as they twist and dive. Then there's me. Close to the former, but not quite. And certainly not the latter. Feeling compelled to show the group that I could trust God even on a roller coaster I reluctantly agreed to one ride. I crouched as low in the seat as I could get, placing my glasses securely in my purse which luckily had a strap long enough to hang around my neck and twine around my arm. Now I know that the bar securely holds me in place, but just to make sure I firmly gripped it with one hand, pressing steadily down to help hold it in place. With my other hand I grasped the front of the seat in front of me. And as we began to slide forward, I closed my eyes and gritted my teeth. The only shouts from my lips were not of joy, but of terror. And yet, when I stumbled off the ride and my legs quit shaking, I felt a big grin stretch across my face and a rush of joy surged through for I had not allowed my fear to keep me from participating. There is good news for those who ride through life just like I ride a roller coaster, those who move into new territory, but do so with reluctant trepidation, who allow their uncertainty and fear to blind them to the exhilarating joy of the Spirit blowing through them creating new possibilities, who long to hold on to the past instead of reaching out to embrace the future, thereby missing the wonder of life unfolding with blessing, who hear God's call and want to turn away. You may feel lost in the midst of unfamiliar routines, new ways of doing things. You may be overwhelmed by the prospect of new responsibilities. But you can lift your hands to God with thanksgiving. Through all the changes and challenges of life—the highs, the lows, even when you feel that you have been spun upside down, God is good. God is with you, holding you fast with grace and power, strengthening you, guiding you, giving you courage. And nothing can separate you from God's love. The life of God's people has always been a journey, a moving ever forward that is possible because no matter where we go, God is there to guide and comfort and lead. God calls us in love, to love. We have a choice. We can close our eyes and ears and pretend that nothing happened, or we can believe in the presence and power of God and trust that even as God calls us, God equips us for the job. Even now, God is calling you. God needs your love and your hands, your energy and your mind. The world is full of people who are hungry, who are lost, who are confused and hurting, who are sick and dying and afraid. And we are the ones, we are the people that, for some reason none of us can explain, have been chosen, who have been selected and named and claimed to be the messengers of God. You are Jesus' choice to carry on his name. You have been claimed and chosen.

And when you open your eyes and your hearts to Christ, when you step up boldly and joyfully, well...the adventure begins. More good news—even as God calls, God nurtures. God places us in community and here we can be strengthened to do the work to which God calls us. Whenever and however we gather we are part of something greater than ourselves, for we are joined with the apostles and saints of all the ages—with Peter and James and John and Matthias, with priests and prophets, missionaries and martyrs, with those who have taught Sunday School and moderated meetings, with those who have served meals to the hungry and spoken out for the oppressed...we are part of something so filled with light and love that we ourselves are swept up into beauty. The torch has been passed—to us. We are the ones in this time and this place called to bind the wounds of the broken hearted, to care for those who lie forgotten by the side of the road, to offer a cup of cold water to those who thirst for love, to set free those who are held captive by addictions and despair, to open hearts to the wonder of God's love. And even as we hear our name called we can hold our head high for we are upheld by the prayers of our companions on the way, we are nurtured with worship and scripture. and whatever happens, wherever we go we dwell in the hollow of God's hands. Rejoice for God is good and God's steadfast love is forever.

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: Panis Angelicus by Cesar Franck -Kelli Watson

Prayers of Intercession

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

Holy God, in Christ Jesus the joy of the church is made complete. Root the church in your Word and unify us as Christ's body. Send us into the world as your loving people, ready to testify to your Spirit at work. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Mighty God, the world is your handiwork, displaying your creative impulse. Seas teem with life, forests reach up to praise you, and the mystery of life lies deep in the soil. Guard and keep this world for the well-being of all your creatures. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Gracious Sovereign, those who follow your ways are like trees planted near streams of water. Establish the leaders of nations and all in authority in your grace and truth. Strengthen them, so that the people they serve will have abundant life. 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 and understanding for Kayleigh, comfort for Patsy, healing for Jeanette, Claudia & Fran, Edie Marie, Ed and family, prayers for Michael Gilleece and family, Theresa, and our country, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. Hear us O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Thanksgiving at the Table

Blessed are you, O God of the universe. Your mercy is everlasting and your faithfulness endures from age to age. Praise to you for creating the heavens and the earth. Praise to you for saving the earth from the waters of the flood. Praise to you for bringing the Israelites safely through the sea. Praise to you for leading your people through the wilderness to the land of milk and honey. Praise to you for the words and deeds of Jesus, your anointed one. Praise to you for the death and resurrection of Christ. Praise to you for your Spirit poured out on all nations. In the night on 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. With this bread and cup we remember our Lord's Passover from death to life as we proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again. O God of resurrection and new life: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us and on these gifts of bread and wine. Bless this feast. Grace our table with your presence. **Come, Holy Spirit.** Reveal yourself to us in the breaking of the bread. Raise us up as the body of Christ for the world. Breathe new life into us. Send us forth, burning with justice, peace, and love. **Come, Holy Spirit.** With your holy ones of all times and places, with the earth and all its creatures, with sun and moon and stars, we praise you, O God, blessed and Holy Trinity, 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.

Closing Hymn: *The Church's One Foundation vs. 1&5 Hymn #654 -Kelli Watson*

Vs. 1 The church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord; she is his new creation by water and the word. From heav'n he came and sought her to be his hoy bride; with his own blood he bought her, and for her life he died.

Vs. 5 Yet she on earth has union with God, the Three in One, and mystic sweet communion with those whose rest is won. Oh, blessed heav'nly chorus! Lord, save us by your face, that we, like saints before us, may see you face to face.

Blessing

May our glorious God grant you a spirit of wisdom to know and to love the risen Lord Jesus. The God of life, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Alleluia! Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!** Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia!

Thanks be to God. Alleluia!