

## 7 Easter Leadership Letter

Dear Friends, The Psalms are a collection of songs and poems written by God's people in times of triumph and times of trouble. They are an offering of honest emotions to God, trusting that God will receive them and accept them—and us—in love. They sing of hope and despair, confidence and confusion, peace and anger, grief and joy. Sometimes all those in the same psalm. Psalm 102 is one of those with its verses of confident praise woven together with words of abject despair. The mood shifts back and forth, but the thread that connects the whole is one of trust in God (even when we struggle to understand what is happening). I pray that these verses will give voice to your own thoughts and concerns and that God will embrace you with understanding and courage.

Yours in Christ,  
Janet Hoover

Day 1 Read Psalm 102:1-2 We come before God for many reasons. Sometimes we come on dancing feet with hands uplifted words of joy and praise tumbling out. Sometimes we come with hesitance, faces stained with tears of remorse. Sometimes “help me!” bursts from us. And sometimes, like the psalmist, we are so worn down with struggle and longing, so weakened by problems or illness or grief that we can barely choke out our prayers. Sometimes the specifics don't matter as much to us as our longing for God's presence. I read these verses as a crescendo of confidence rising to God. Remember—God has promised that there is nothing that can take us from God's love, so lift your voice to God—offer your praise, your thanks, your confession, your needs—trusting that God not only listens but is always at work to bring you peace.

Day 2 Read Psalm 102:3-12 These verses are not pleasant to read—for they come from the anguished soul of one battling depression and despair. We prefer to read Psalms of thanks and praise, yet most of us experience times when the gray cloud descends around us. When that sort of hopeless emptiness creeps into our lives, it is tempting to pull the covers over our head and give in to the darkness—and it sounds as if that is what the psalmist is doing. But this psalm doesn't leave us there. For out of the ashes of loneliness and longing, the psalmist manages to choke out his trust in God's goodness. It may not carry the energy he longs for, but it is a first step toward healing. When we struggle with the darkness, when everything we eat tastes of defeat, we can bring our pain to God. When we feel as if our joy is dried up and gone, we can bring our emptiness to God. As we speak what we feel—not what we think we should feel—God will hold us and gently remind us that even in the valley of shadows we are not alone. God has walked with us. God will walk with us. God is with us now.

Day 3 Read Psalm 102:12-17 God is great and greatly to be praised. God is eternal and glorious. The time is coming when the power of God will radiate with such clear and visible splendor that kings and princes, presidents and governors, CEOs and billionaires will bow with respect and adoration. In a crescendo of images, the psalmist describes the awesome transcendence of God. And then in the midst of glory we discover an incredible affirmation. This God who created and rules over all creation listens to the destitute, the broken, the needy. God cares about the movers and shakers and is even now at work to bring them home, but God also cares about ordinary, seemingly insignificant men and women and children. We may move easily in the halls of power or we may huddle in the alley. Either way—any way—God listens and loves. You belong to God. In that is your joy and your strength.

Day 4 Read Psalm 102:18-22 The majesty and awesomeness of God fills me with hope and praise. But what gives me the courage to move through the hard times is the memory of the ways God has worked with me in my difficulties and pain. It is easy to live timid lives—held back by chains of doubt and fear. But we don't have to live imprisoned by guilt and regret, by the fear that we will never change, or by any form of doubt. We can try new forms of service, move out of our little boxes of comfort into the wide-open spaces of grace because just as God has sustained us in the past, so God is with us now. What is it that keeps you from living the adventure of faith God has set before you? Ask God to encourage you, opening the gates to the abundant life for which we have been created. It is important for us to remember that God is at work in us to renew and enliven our spirits. It is important to act out of this well of power and grace. But the adventure is not just for us and our own private reflection. As part of the family of faith we are to tell God's story so that our children and our children's children will know what it means to belong to God. If we don't...well, it would only take one generation of silence for the story to evaporate into the mists. Telling the story means repeating the biblical accounts in fresh ways that will touch new generations. It also means talking about our own personal experiences—times when we felt God's arms wrapped around us, times when we felt the cooling streams of mercy, times when we were challenged to be and do more than we thought possible. There are lots of ways to do this: saying “I'll pray for you (and then doing it), marking a Bible with your favorite

passages and giving it to someone, writing a letter to be read years from now that describe your walk with God. Whatever you do, remember you are a vital part of the great cloud of witnesses, cheering on the efforts of those yet to come.

Day 5 Read Psalm 102:23-28 The flow of this psalm as a whole moves from longing to remembering to praise...and back to longing again. Such is our life. We go from mountain peaks of success and gratitude to valleys of despair. The good news is that wherever we are, for centuries the Mohawk Valley has been populated by people of faith who in spite of problems and illness and war have trusted in God. And they have gathered in homes and sanctuaries, through Zoom and mail to share that faith. Whether people gather in calico dresses or civil war uniforms, in beads and fringed jackets, or white gloves and heels, or whatever the fashion industry produces 200 years from now—God is present. God's love and compassion are constant. We are called to take our place in the procession of the faithful, to sing a song of hope, to reach out to love and serve in Christ's name, to tell our story...trusting that we are not the end of the procession. Give thanks today for those who have gone before us and give thanks for those yet to come. Most of all give thanks that God's love spans generations and we are all held in the hollow of God's hands.

Day 6 Read Psalm 102:1-28 O God, sometimes life is just too much—too much heartache, too many disappointments, too much busyness, too many demands. I feel my strength fade and my spirit wilt. Help me to feel your presence, and to remember your love. Let traces of grace into my brokenness and work your healing mercies in my heart. It is so easy for me to look down and in and see only my own needs and struggles. Straighten my shoulders and lift my head so that I can see your light on the horizon. Help me to inhale courage and joy. And then, God, give me the ability to sing a song of praise that will echo through the years so that all your children, even those yet to come, will join in and we will all feast with you in glory.

### Information and updates for the week:

-Our Sunday 10:00 AM worship service on the Zoom platform continues this week for those with internet access via computer, tablet, or smart phone. 42 households joined us for our service this past Sunday, which, unfortunately, experienced some “wrinkles” due to disruption on the Zoom platform. The problems of getting video connections were not specific to Zion but, rather, experienced by Zoom users across the US and the UK. Zoom assures its customers that the issue has been resolved. Thanks to Deacon Patsy Glista, John Blackburn, Mary Senn, and our congregants for their adaptiveness as each took the unanticipated disruptions in stride and still provided/experienced a wonderful service.

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwvSTBER2INb1o1Qzd6WGxDdz09> Meeting ID: 843 5484 0714, Password: 022654.

-Or by smart phone, One tap mobile, +16465588656, 84354840714#, 1#, 022654# US (New York)

-Or Dial by your location, - 646 558 8656 US (New York) Meeting ID: 843 5484 0714, Password: 022654

-IF YOU DON'T HAVE INTERNET ACCESS, you can use ANY phone and call 1 646 558 8656 US (New York), Meeting ID: 843 5484 0714, Password: 022654.

-You can continue participating in **Zion's virtual Sunday** 10:00 AM worship service by utilizing the Service of the Word template provided later in this newsletter. Feel free to use the Service of the Word at any time if you aren't able to join us in spirit at 10:00 AM on Sunday.

-**Attention all those with children!** We are very excited to announce that Zion will now have a special time JUST FOR KIDS following Sunday's worship service. “Jen's Craft Time” will begin at 11am on Sundays. Also, on Wednesday evenings at 7pm, ALL THE KIDS are invited to join “Jen's Storytime!” These programs begin this Sunday, May 24<sup>th</sup>. Please email Zion's Nursery Attendant, Jennifer Pierce at [pierce883@yahoo.com](mailto:pierce883@yahoo.com) for your separate Zoom invitations!

-Zion's **Call Committee** met for the second time last week. Jack Henke and Jeff Ritchie graciously agreed to serve as the co-chairs for this important committee. Additional committee members include Linda Bennett (council liaison), John Blackburn, Ryan Kulawy, Lisa Lucas-Myers, Doreen Nicholls, and Deb Murdock. You'll be hearing more from Council and

the Call Committee in upcoming weeks requesting your input on the process. Thanks to Jack and Jeff, along with all committee members, for their contributions to this significant process on behalf of our Zion family.

-Council will create a **task force to make decisions about how we can best “Relax the Pause”** (aka—eventually return to “in-person” worship) in a safe and responsible way. Representatives from all the major church committees will be invited to create our plan for returning to “in-person” worship. If you are interested in serving on this committee, please contact Mark Thompson or Kristen Burson. In the meantime, our church cleaning staff has resumed its role of cleaning and sanitizing Zion’s facilities.

-**Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, is Companion Synod Sunday** in our synod. The intent of Companion Synod Sunday is to hold the Lutherans of Zimbabwe and Zambia in our hearts and remember the connection we have. At Zion, we can participate in Companion Synod Sunday by giving thanks for our sisters and brothers in Christ in Zimbabwe and Zambia and hold them in prayer. In addition, we can contribute to two important initiatives which support our companions: 1) Drought and Hunger Relief and 2) Publication of Faith Formation Material in native languages. Your financial contributions can be sent to the office at Zion, designating the purpose of your gift. A more detailed description of the desperate situation in Zimbabwe can be found on Zion’s website ([zionlutheranny.org](http://zionlutheranny.org)) in the document Zimbabwe Situation Report.

-We are sad to report that one of our fellow Zion congregants, **Lydia Snyder**, passed away this week. Please remember Lydia’s partner, Miguel, and her family in your prayers. Cards and notes can be sent to Miguel and Lydia’s family at 917 Mary St., Utica, NY 13501.

As the restrictions imposed to ensure safety during this pandemic continue, with some signs of gradual and cautious “loosening” being discussed, I find myself experiencing a seemingly contradictory set of emotions. I’ll admit that, at times, discouragement and frustration are all too familiar. And yet, there are so many things encountered that regularly lift my spirits and give me hope. I LOVE the pre-service banter that starts and the “joyful chaos” that closes our weekly Zoom worship service. (Thanks to Kristen for coining this delightful phrase!) I feel moved when we hear from Millie Angevine about how much the 20+ birthday cards received meant to her, or how Claudia and Fran “feel” the power of the prayers we continue to offer for Fran’s health and recovery, along with our support of Claudia. Another favorite hymn of mine is On Eagles Wings ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nZcyEnwyTI> ). The final verse and chorus are as follows (and feel free to sing along if you feel so moved): For to His angels He's given a command to guard you in all of your ways. Upon their hands they will bear you up lest you dash your foot against a stone. And He will raise you up on eagles' wings, bear you on the breath of dawn, make you to shine like the sun and hold you in the palm of His hand. As we continue in these uncertain times, let us remember that our loving God holds us in the palm of His hand always.

Peace,  
Mark Thompson and Kristen Burson  
Church council co-presidents

## 7 EASTER – SERVICE OF THE WORD

### GATHERING

#### WELCOME

#### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

God of all mercy, and consolation, come to the help of your people, turning us from our sin to live for you alone. Give us the power of your Holy Spirit that we may confess our sin, receive your forgiveness, and grow into the fullness of Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Most merciful God, **We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen.**

In the Mercy of Almighty God, Jesus Christ was given to die for us, and for his sake God forgives all our sins. As a called and ordained minister of the church of Christ, and by his authority, I therefore declare to you the forgiveness of all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

#### THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

Alleluia! Christ is risen. **Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!**

Joined to Christ in the waters of baptism, we are raised with him to new life. Let us give thanks for the gift of baptism. We give you thanks, O God, for in the beginning you created us in your image and planted us in a well-watered garden. In the desert you promised pools of water for the parched, and you gave us water from the rock. When we did not know the way, you sent the Good Shepherd to lead us to still waters. At the cross, you watered us from Jesus' wounded side, and on this day, you shower us again with the water of life. We praise you for your salvation through water, for the water in this font, and for all water everywhere. Bathe us in your forgiveness, grace, and love. Satisfy the thirsty and give us the life only you can give. To you be given honor and praise through Jesus Christ our Lord in the unity of the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

**Opening Hymn:** *A Hymn of Glory Let Us Sing #393, Verses 1 & 2* –Mary Senn

**Vs. 1** A hymn of glory let us sing! New hymns throughout the world shall ring: Alleluia! Alleluia! Christ, by a road before untrod, ascends unto the throne of God. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

**Vs. 2** The holy apostolic band upon the Mount of Olives stand: Alleluia! Alleluia! And with his faithful followers see their Lord ascend in majesty. Alleluia! Alleluia! Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!

#### Prayer of the Day

Almighty and ever-living God, you hold together all things in heaven and on earth. In your great mercy receive the prayers of all your children, and give to all the world the Spirit of your truth and peace, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### THE WORD

**First Reading:** Acts 1:6-14

**Second Reading:** 1 Peter 4:12-14, 5:6-11

**Gospel:** John 17:1-11

**Sermon** *Asking on Their Behalf* –Rev. Jennifer DeWeerth

The great preacher, Barbara Brown Taylor, confessed in her book, *An Altar in the World*, when she finally got to the chapter where she needed to write about prayer, that “I would rather show someone my checkbook stubs than talk about my prayer life,” and described herself as a “prayer-weakling.” Sometimes our prayers feel like that—especially when we attempt to pray for those most in need of prayer; we may feel like we don’t know how to pray as we ought (Rom. 8:26).

And yet every week we join in the public Prayers of the People, a long petitionary prayer that includes intercessory prayers. We pray for those in need of healing *by name*. And most of us probably pray for others in our private prayers every day, naming their specific needs before God. In our Gospel reading for today, we hear Jesus engage in petitionary prayer, and specifically the kind where you petition on behalf of others— **intercessory prayer**. Near the end of his very long address to his disciples after he washes their feet, *he prays for them—he asks “on their behalf.”*

**What does it mean to pray on someone else's behalf? What do we think is happening when we pray for others?**

If you ever read the novel or saw the movie, *The Help*, about a young white woman in the south in the sixties, and the Black domestic workers who tell their stories for a book she proposes to compile, you will remember the character Aibileen Clark. Aibileen is a middle-aged woman who works six days a week from morning until night as a maid, but every day she spends an hour or two of her precious time at home praying. But here’s the thing. She doesn’t just *say* prayers for other people. She writes out her prayers for them in a notebook, day after day, as she has since she left school in the seventh grade. A teacher, distraught that a promising young girl was giving up her education, told her that to stay sharp, she must read *and write* every day. So Aibileen started writing out her daily prayers, which contain long lists of individuals and their specific needs, and she never stopped.

Everyone knows that Aibileen is a serious and powerful intercessory pray-er. People ask her all the time to pray for them. Her best friend, Minny Jackson, tells her, “We all on a party line to God, but you, you setting right in his ear.” This concerns Aibileen, that people might somehow think that she is working magic with her prayers, when to her it is just the daily work of praying for every person on her prayer list.

And of course, it’s not magic, and she doesn’t have some sort of special power to bend God’s ear to her requests. Aibileen is really just a person who so deeply prays for the people on her list, that over and over again, *she sees the world from their perspective and from God’s*. She sees who they really are and what they need.

Aibileen’s not perfect; she has cause to feel anger and resentment. But she always sits down at night and writes out her prayers, not for herself, but for the people on her list. This practice can’t help but shape her heart and her actions, and in turn, shapes the people around her.

How many of us, though, know people like Minny Jackson, who see intercessory prayer as a way of getting God to do something that God wasn’t going to do? God could cure the cancer for Mary but won’t intervene unless a lot more people start to pray for Mary. God would make Tom well, if we would just prayer harder. But if we don’t believe in this magical, interventionist aspect of intercessory prayer, then what do we think is happening between ourselves and God when we pray for others?

Martin Luther famously addressed this very question in his commentary on the Sermon on the Mount. He wrote: “Therefore, Christ says now: ‘Your heavenly Father knows what you need before you ask for it.’ It is as if he would say: ‘What are you up to? Do you suppose that you will talk God down with your long babbling and make him give you what you need? There is no need for you to persuade him with your words or to give him detailed instructions; for he knows beforehand what you need, even better than you do yourself.’ . . .

God knows every person’s need. God cares about each person. Why then do we petition specifically? Why do we pray for others, and even by name? According to Luther, by our praying, we are instructing *ourselves* more than we are God. Prayer “teaches us to recognize who we are and who God is, and to learn what we need and where we are to look for it and find it.” Or as John Wesley says, “The end of our praying is not to inform God, but rather to inform ourselves....It is not so much to move God but to move ourselves.”

Intercessory prayer is not a means of lobbying God for special favors, but a means to draw us closer to God and to God's vision for the world and all people in it, especially the people we pray for by name. It has the power to grow our hearts and shape our behavior, as individuals and as a worshipping community.

A few days ago, I read a profile of an ICU nurse at one of the most Covid impacted hospitals in NYC—for a while there were 8 floors devoted to Covid patients. He's an orthodox Jew who works 13 hours shifts, and comes home to a wife and four young children long after the kids have gone to bed. Added to a tripled load of patients he takes care of every day, he has been assigned the task of saying the Viduy for dying Covid patients in the hospital. He does this even though he has no religious training for it, because rabbis can no longer go into patient rooms. So for the past couple of months, he's been going into those rooms and giving last rites, in Hebrew, then in English, for the dying Jewish patients.

"It's the realization and acceptance that the end is here; it is time to say goodbye and ask for forgiveness from our creator. They have a family and they need to know this is done, and the patients can't say it for themselves. I'm not an emotional person, but it's a rough thing to get through. It hurts. If their death is imminent, I wait with them. Then I pull it together in the elevator and return to my patients."

He prays on their behalf. It reminded me a little of someone we all know. Not an official Jewish rabbi performing the rites for a fee, but a healer, a caregiver, nonetheless.

Someone who knew as much as anyone the depth of God's love and the personal nature of God's care and asked that it be present for others.

Someone who said to God, "I am asking on their behalf, because they are yours."

Whether we say our prayers or write them out like Aibeleen, something happens when we pray *for others*, not because God wouldn't help them without our prayers, but because we learn the needs of others by bringing them before God, and when we do, we bind their needs to our own lives. We ask on others' behalf, because they belong to God, as we do. Amen.

### **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:** *Be Exalted, O God* -Chambers/Wilhelmi

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Uplifted by the promised hope of healing and resurrection, we join the people of God in all times and places in praying for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

You call all people of the world your children. Judge the nations justly, show mercy to the oppressed, and speak truth to power through your prophets. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You come near to us when we are lost, and you hear our distress. We pray for those who suffer in any way. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Your commands are good and merciful. Give us courage to take hold of our baptismal promises to work for justice, advocate for the voiceless, and free the oppressed and imprisoned in body, mind, or spirit. Lord, in your mercy, **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, Paul, Gail, Fran & Claudia, Edie Marie, Suzee, Trina, Tracy, Claudia T., the family of Michael G., Ed & Christina, Michael Gilleece and family, Donna B., Debbie, Diane, Caryn, Steve & Jess, Bernie Prigge, peace and comfort for Miguel and the friends and family of Lydia Snyder, Your Neighbors clients, Dave, Jordan, Alison, Theresa, Barbara C., Donald, residents of the Presbyterian Home, we pray for healing and strength for Donna and comfort and peace for her family, and Paul Van Allen, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

With bold confidence in your love, almighty God, we place all for whom we pray into your eternal care; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **Thanksgiving at the Table**

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken unto the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory 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**    *Lord, You Give the Great Commission* #579, Verses 1 & 2        *–Mary Senn*

Vs. 1 Lord, you give the great commission: Heal the sick and preach the word. Lest the church neglect its mission, and the gospel go unheard, help us witness to your purpose with renewed integrity: With the Spirit's gifts empow'r us for the work of ministry.

Vs. 2 Lord, you call us to your service: in my name baptize and teach. That the world may trust your promise, life abundant meant for each, give us all new fervor, draw us closer in community: With the Spirit's gifts empow'r us for the work of ministry.

### **Blessing**

May the One who brought forth Jesus from the dead raise you to new life, fill you with hope, and turn your mourning into dancing. Almighty God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you now and forever. **Amen.**

### **Dismissal**

Christ is risen, just as he said. Go in peace. Share the good news. Alleluia! **Thanks be to God. Alleluia!**

### **Two Volunteers needed!**

Zion established a wonderful telephone outreach committee when the quarantine began. Since then, our volunteers have been hard at work making weekly phone calls to eight members each. It is a beautiful way for us to connect with our members during this time- should they need prayer, and just to check in with each other in general to see how everyone is doing. We are currently looking for ***two new call volunteers*** to make these member check-in phone calls! Please call Sara at 315-316-8288, or email [SSilva@zionluth.com](mailto:SSilva@zionluth.com) if you would like to volunteer. Thank you!



## Enjoy our 5<sup>th</sup> recipe exchange, provided to us by Sara Silva

### Vegetarian BLT wrap (using carrot bacon!)

#### Ingredients:

1. Carrots, however many you would like
2. ½ teaspoon liquid smoke
3. 2-3 teaspoons Maple syrup
4. Garlic powder, to taste
5. Smoked paprika, to taste
6. Onion powder, to taste
7. Pepper, to taste
8. For the wrap: roasted sundried tomato wrap, mayo, pickles, avocado, lettuce of your choice, tomato, red onion

#### Directions:

Mix 1-7 ingredients in a good size mixing bowl

Shave your carrots with a peeler until thinly sliced to resemble the size of a slice of bacon

Marinate the carrots in ingredients 1-7 for five minutes

If you have an air fryer: 380 for 5 minutes (may need an additional few minutes depending on the size of the “bacon”, or bake in the oven on 350 and check it every 5 minutes until it looks done and crunchy. Spread your mayo on the wrap and build your sandwich by adding the rest of the ingredients!



Sue Pardee's mom, Vivian Deckman, will be turning 90 on June 6<sup>th</sup>! The family thought it would be fun if she received 90 cards! If you have a card and would like to send one, we know that she would enjoy it.

Vivian Deckman  
31 Stirling Dr. Apt S216  
New Hartford, NY 13413

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