

## Advent 2

Leadership Letter for the Week of December 5<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup>

Dear Zion Family,

On the First Sunday in Advent, 39 in-person congregants and 11 Zoomers celebrated our traditional “Hanging of the Greens” program at Zion. Here are a few excerpts from, “The Meaning of the Service”: *The season of Advent—the season of “going forward” towards the birth of Christ—and Christmas, the time of God’s physical entrance into our world, both have a long history. This season and its customs have developed through many centuries. Old customs, symbols, and observances are refined, renewed, replaced; new ones are added. As we look at our decorations that adorn the church, we are mindful that, although it is not Christmas yet, it will be here soon. We make ready for the birthday of the King, our Lord, and we dedicate these symbols—and ourselves—to the glory of God and his Son.*

*There has been a Christmas tree in Zion Lutheran Church every Christmas for the past 176 years. This year, we have a new tree, purchased at Home Depot and decorated with white streamers and red flowers that adorned some of our Christmas trees in the past. At the top of the tree is a star, but not the traditional white one. This star is one of a dozen delightful star tree ornaments sent to Zion in 2019 by the congregation of St. Oswald’s Lutheran Church in Weilimdorf, Germany. St. Oswald’s was the home church of Zion’s founder, Pastor Johann Andreas (Andrew) Wetzel, the minister who began the tradition of bringing a Christmas tree into the church and trimming it with apples, candles, artificial roses, and a star on top. I love the connections of the old and the new! The rest of the star decorations from Germany are displayed on the table in the Narthex. We are grateful to Jack Henke for maintaining contact every holiday season with Edeltraud John, St. Oswald’s historian. (Jack’s latest correspondence with Edeltraud John can be found on page nine.)*

### WORSHIP ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2021

On the second Sunday in Advent, our service will be led by David Grindle, Synodically Authorized Minister, and John Blackburn, Worship Assistant.

The 10:00 AM service will be offered in-person in the sanctuary, 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=TDJGTkpwSTBER2lNb1o1Qzd6WGxDdz09>, 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/UCWzOtbCe2z7bIPvxp62lA>

### SUPPLY PASTORS FOR IN-PERSON WORSHIP AT ZION FOR THE REST OF DECEMBER

December 12, 2021: The Rev. Jennifer DeWeerth

December 19, 2021: Deacon Patsy Glista

December 24, 2021: **Christmas Eve at 7 PM:** Deacon Patsy Glista

December 26, 2021: *There will be no worship at Zion. We are welcome to attend Our Saviour at 10 AM*

## ADVENT DEVOTIONS

On the table in the Narthex there are four Advent booklets that include Bible readings, reflections, and prayers. The titles are: "A Season of Peace: Advent Devotions for Seniors," "The Fullness of Time: Inspiration from Henri J. M. Nouwen," "Seasons Greetings: Welcoming Christ Through the Traditions of Christmas," and "Wait Upon the Lord: Devotions for Advent!" If you would like one sent to you, please call Sara at (315) 732-4110.

## ANGEL & MITTEN TREES

Please remember that December 5th is the last day to bring gifts for the Angel and Mitten Trees and for the Lutheran Home. Thank you for your generosity.

## GIVE THE GIFT OF FAIR TRADE THIS CHRISTMAS!

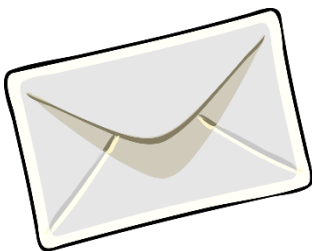
For the next three Sundays, Fair Trade items will be displayed on a cart in the foyer to make shopping for holiday gifts very convenient. In addition to Toffee Caramel and Hazelnut Crème Decaf (prices of both have been slashed in time for Christmas giving), we offer Sister's Blend, Mind, Body and Soul, and Organic Decaf coffee. Our Rooibos Tea, Decaf English Breakfast, and Green Tea cost \$3.50 per box. Hot Cocoa is displayed on the bottom shelf and will make a nice warm, winter gift. The organic chocolate bars (\$3.00 each) will be just right as stocking stuffers. Can you picture yourself sitting by the fire, enjoying some almonds and cashews? In the box on the bottom shelf, there are bags in which to carry your purchases and gift bags, tissue, and tags for gift giving. *Thank you for making a difference in the lives of small farmers in the U.S.A. and around the world by supporting Zion's Fair Trade Ministry this Christmas.*

May we end this letter with a verse from Isaiah and an Advent prayer.

The people who walked in darkness  
Have seen a great light;  
Those who lived in a land of deep darkness—  
On them light has shined.  
Isaiah 9:2

Lord Jesus, you are the source of our hope. May we shine this light of hope for others as we wait patiently for your coming. Amen.

May we all be blessed with light and hope,  
Laurel McCurdy, Council Co-president



***Weekly Snail Mail:*** Since the pandemic began, we have been mailing out our weekly leadership letter. If you no longer wish to receive weekly snail mail because you returned to in person worship, please let Sara know. If you wish to receive only the monthly Newsletter, please let Sara know. If you would like to receive your weekly snail mail via email, please let us know. You can do so by calling the church office at 315-732-4110 (please leave Sara a message if she's away from the desk) or send an email to: [office@zionluth.com](mailto:office@zionluth.com). Thank you!!

Zion Lutheran Church  
New Hartford, NY  
Advent 2



December 5, 2021

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

PRELUDE: *Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness*, by William Gardiner -Kelli Watson

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, one God, who alone does wonders, who lifts up the lowly, who fills the hungry with good things. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the tender mercy of our God. God for whom we wait,

**In the presence of one another, we confess our sin before you. We fail in believing that your good news is for us. We falter in our call to tend your creation. We find our sense of self in material wealth. We fear those different from ourselves. We forget that we are your children and turn away from your love. Forgive us, Blessed One, and assure us again of your saving grace. Amen.**

God, in Christ Jesus, has looked with favor upon you! Through the power of the Holy Spirit, your sins are forgiven. You are children of the Most High, inheritors of the eternal promise, and recipients of divine mercy. God strengthens you anew to follow the way of peace. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn *Prepare the Royal Highway, vs. 1 & 4 Hymn#264* -Kelli Watson

**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 our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming give to all the people of the world knowledge of your salvation; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

THE LIGHTING OF THE SECOND ADVENT CANDLE

ADVENT INVOCATION

-Doreen Nicholls

John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus to come into the world. His call to repentance challenged his listeners to consider their relationship with God. They were to repent of their sins and then so discipline their lives that they would be ready to receive him when he came.

First Reading: Malachi 3:1-4 Bible Pg. #1490

THE LIGHTING OF THE 1<sup>ST</sup> & 2<sup>ND</sup> ADVENT CANDLES

(light 2 purple candles)

-Doreen Nicholls

Today we relight the Candle of Expectation, reminding us of God's great promise that a Messiah would be sent to save the people. As we light the Candle of Preparation, it reminds us that as John the Baptist prepared the way for Jesus, so we also need to prepare ourselves for his coming into our lives.

**THE HYMN:** O Come, O Come, Emmanuel ELW #257 (verse 2)

O come, O Wisdom from on high, embracing all things far and nigh in strength and beauty come and stay; teach us your will and guide our way.

**Refrain:** Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to you, O Israel.

### THE PRAYER

—Jan Corn

Blessed are you, O Lord of God, ruler of the universe. John the Baptist calls all people to prepare the Lord's way for the kingdom of heaven is near. Bless us as we light the candles on this wreath. Baptize us with the fire of your Spirit, that we may be a light shining in the darkness welcoming others as Christ has welcomed us, for he is our light and our salvation. Blessed be God forever. **Amen.**

**Second Reading:** Philippians 1:3-11 Bible Pg. #1829

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

#### Halle, Halle, Hallelujah

The image shows three staves of musical notation in G major (one sharp). The lyrics are written below the notes. The first staff contains the lyrics: Hal-le, hal-le, hal-le - lu - jah. Hal-le, hal-le, hal-le. The second staff contains: - le - lu - jah. Hal-le, hal-le, hal-le. The third staff contains: lu - jah. Hal-le - lu - jah. Hal-le - lu - jah.

**Gospel:** Luke 3:1-6 Bible Pg. #1593

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

**Sermon:** —David Grindle, SAM

Dubai is an interesting place. Nestled along the Persian Gulf, Dubai is more than a city. It is an old-fashioned city-state. Like the city-states of Italy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is an independent nation in confederation with those independent states around it. Dubai and its neighbors make up the United Arab Emirates, a nation established in 1972.

The Maktoum family has ruled Dubai since before the founding of the UAE, and Sheik Rashid, father of the current Sheik Mohamed, had a vision for what the emirate would be. He had laid out the city, the deep water port, and many other projects in his head long before they were realities.

In fact, the port of Jebel Ali, which lies north of the city and is a crucial shipping point for not only the Levant and areas to the west, but also for supplying the US military in the region, was “in the middle of nowhere” when it was built, according to our guide when I visited there for work.

It was so much in the middle of nowhere that someone wanted to build a camel racetrack in the area near it. It was open desert with large dunes. When they asked, the Emir said no, that's where the second airport is going..... Dubai barely had need for one airport at the time, much less two. Now, decades later, the port of Jebel Ali and the finalized Al Maktoum airport make up one of the largest free-trade zones in the world, bringing in millions of dollars for the emirate. Materials can move between air freight to ocean freight tax free, paying only the terminal charges.

If only the mountains of sand were moved, the potential of the area to serve a purpose no one else could see would become a reality. The desert that everyone else saw masked the global shipping hub that Sheik Rashid knew would be there.

Every valley shall be raised up and every mountain and hill made low. The crooked straight and the rough places plain. The Lord comes and we must prepare a world that is what God sees, what God intended, and what God created when the world was created. The image of Global Ports Dubai and that city is an easy one to illustrate this if you think about it in physical terms. The amount of earth moved to create a space for millions to live and work where once there was nothing is stunning. I literally watched a canal open that had been dug to provide a water taxi route through the city, where once desert had

been. Outside of our hotel, a new highway was being built to help alleviate some of the congestion on the main highway that runs along the coast. The world was changing to achieve a vision.

But infrastructure projects aren't what the gospel is about. Or are they?

Today's readings, the Gospel and the prophet, call on us to create a space as it was intended by God. One without barriers and without fear. A world in which the richness and beauty of God's creation is seen for all of its glory so that it can be in the presence of God almighty and glorify God, the creator of all things.

That sounds lovely. Until I'm the valley or mountain. How about when I'm the crooked place that needs straightening? Well, that's a problem, now isn't it.

I must admit to you that I have real issues with the contemporary view of Advent and Christmas. The Disneyfication and Currier and Ives-edness of the whole thing has stripped away the heart of the story. Our world of candles, holly, snow, and delightfully cute children in bathrobes helps us gloss over the cry for change from a man who would best be described as "special" where I grew up in the south. It has clad in blue and put a halo on the unmarried pregnant teen that is at the heart of Luke's narrative, because, to see John, Mary, and frankly most of the Gospel people, as they truly are is a mountain we don't want to make low.

The story of Advent and Christmas is a story about "those" people that we've transformed into our people. While John's call is a call for transformation, we've chosen to transform others more often than transforming ourselves. We want to make those people into people we like because that is so much easier than transforming ourselves into someone who can love all of God's people.

That's the kind of transformation that John is talking about. Removing barriers within ourselves is what we must do. The infrastructure that must be changed is internal. Honestly, we don't like that, because it often means confronting things in ourselves that we see in others but desperately want to hide. It means acknowledging we have far more in common with people we don't want to have anything in common with.

It means having civil conversation over differences, accepting one another for who God made us to be even if we don't understand how or why. It means loving people we don't like. Which, I'm firmly convinced, is how Jesus feels about me sometimes.

All too often, we hear the words of John and think of all the changes that need to happen in the world. Yet the changes don't need to happen in the world around us, they MUST happen in us, each one, individually. That's the point of Advent. To prepare the way of the Lord not in the world, but within ourselves.

Yes, that's a lovely image, isn't it? Until we embrace the words of the prophet. He is like a refiner's fire.

I grew up in the town that was home to the nation's first Gold Rush. Before the San Francisco Gold Rush, there was the Gold Rush of 1828 in Dahlonega, Georgia. And, because I grew up there, we learned all about gold mining and refining.

To get to the Gold, you have to move mountains, for it is buried deep within them. But to make it have value, you must refine it. You must melt it and heat it so that the impurities buried within are released and float to the top where they can be swept away, leaving only the pure element. It is a process that requires lots of energy, heat, sweat, and discomfort.

That refining fire is the conviction and presence of God within us. The movement of the Holy Spirit that lets us know when we've done the things we shouldn't or didn't do the things we should do. When we take a deep breath and offer love, kindness, and gratitude to those who would NEVER dream of offering it to us in return.

Loving God means enduring those moments. It means swallowing our pride because we know that life in this world is not about us, but about those around us. Those moments hurt, they are uncomfortable, and they are exactly the refining fire of God working within our sinful souls.

The third verse of the hymn, How Firm a Foundation, has always said it best to me.

When through fiery trials  
Your pathway WILL lie  
My grace all sufficient  
Will be your supply  
The flames will not harm you  
I only design  
Your dross to consume  
And your Gold to refine

These words remind us that a life of Christ is one that is NOT without hardship. Regardless of what the trendy television mega pastors may tell us, our love for God is not the key to a life without burdens and trials. Yet those trials and burdens help rid us of the feelings and emotions like pride, vanity, and superiority that are the dross contaminating a Christian life. The trials remind us that Christ is our brother because Christ became like us, not the other way around.

Living life as someone striving to follow in those footsteps means enduring, loving, and accepting all of those around us. It means questioning the status quo when that system impedes the humanity of my neighbor, regardless of who they are and what they believe. It means that I must think of others before I think of myself. And it means knowing that the circumstances of my world, no matter how difficult or easy, are not a reflection of God's love for me.

Those are the valleys and mountains we must move, and they are all within us. It is never finished, this preparation and refinement. For we are both saint and sinner with the thoughts and actions of each. As much as we want to focus on the saintly thoughts and actions, that's not what Advent is about. Advent is about removing barriers. Those thoughts and actions which make it much harder for God's love to move in this world because God's love moves through us. Through me and you and everyone around us. The people we like and don't like. The folks that have faith, and those that don't. For we are all creations of God and instruments of God, preparing the way for the Lord of Love to move through this world, even if it is another great city buried under the sand which only the ruler can see. Amen.

**Anthem:** *The First Noel/Christmas Eve Waltz, Composed and arranged by David Lantz (played by Marcus Corasanti)*

**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 THE CONGREGATION**

In this season of watching and waiting, let us pray for all people and places that yearn for God's presence.

You send messengers into the world to proclaim the day of your coming. Make our bishops, pastors, deacons, and lay preachers confident in their preaching, that their words and our lives witness to your grace. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

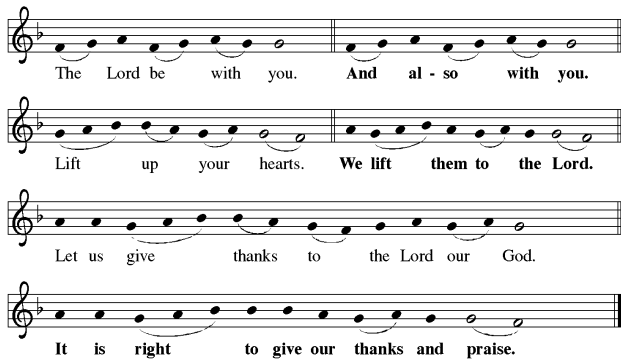
Send your servants to care for those who suffer. Use our ministries and our lives to reach out with compassion to those who are hungry, oppressed, lonely, or ill. Grant them healing and wholeness. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Send prophets to speak difficult truths, even when they are poorly received. Embolden those who ask hard questions and challenge accepted ways. Instill in youth and elders alike a passion for pointing to Jesus in all things. 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, Claudia, Pr. Roger, Patsy, Wesley, Ed and family, and Theresa, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

God of new life, you come among us in the places we least expect.  
Receive these prayers and those of our hearts, in the name of Jesus. **Amen.**

## THE GREAT THANKSGIVING DIALOGUE



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

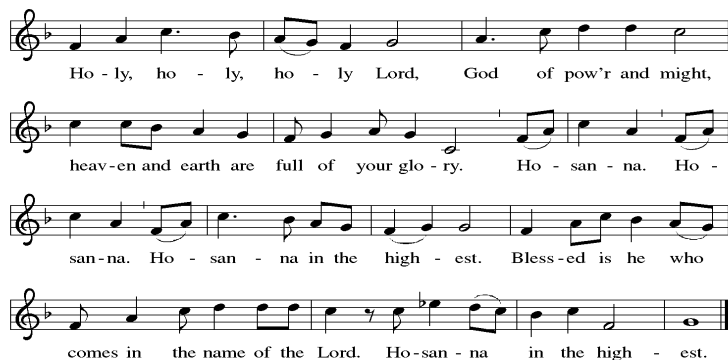
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy..... and join 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.**

## 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

## MEAL

### INVITATION TO COMMUNION,

A feast of love is offered here for you and for all the saints.

### COMMUNION

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

### PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION,

Blessed Jesus, at this table, you have been for us both host and meal. Now send us forth to extend our tables and to share your gifts until that day when all feast together at your heavenly banquet. **Amen.**

## SENDING

### Blessing

God, the beginning and the end, who has written your name in the book of life, bless and keep you in grace and peace from this time forth and forevermore. **Amen.**

**Sending Song:** *Hark, A Thrilling Voice is Sounding, Vs. 1 & 5 Hymn #246* -Kelli Watson

**Vs. 1** Hark! A thrilling voice is sounding! "Christ is near," we hear it say. "Cast away the works of darkness, all you children of the day!"

**Vs. 5** Honor, glory, might, and blessing to the Father and the Son with the everlasting Spirit while unending ages run!

### Dismissal

Go in peace. Christ is near. **Thanks be to God.**

**Postlude:** *In Christ, There is No East or West, by Alexander R. Reinagle* -Kelli Watson

*The altar flowers are given to the glory of God,  
by Karen Toepp & Janet Bagnall in honor of a special occasion.*







## Zion Receives Holiday Greetings from Germany!

Edeltraud John, historian of St. Oswald's Lutheran Church, Weilimdorf, Germany, recently emailed her congregation's best wishes for a happy, healthy Christmas season to all of us at Zion.

Pastor Andrew (Johann Andreas) Wetzel, Zion's founder, grew up in St. Oswald's. This congregation takes great pride in Wetzel's achievements, especially his introduction to Central New York of the German custom of placing decorated Christmas trees in churches.

Edeltraud promised to send us a photo of St. Oswald's 2021 *Tannenbaum* (Christmas tree). I reciprocated the promise and wished the good folks of her congregation, "*Frohe Weihnachten*" (Merry Christmas).

As part of their holiday celebrations, St. Oswald's members placed a Christmas display in the Weilimdorf Public Library. The exhibit also honored Pastor Wetzel and featured photos provided by Zion. The Wetzel display is pictured below.

