

Advent 3, Leadership Letter for Sunday, December 12, 2021

Dear Zion Family,

On the Second Sunday in Advent, 30 in-person congregants and 17 Zoomers welcomed our supply pastor, Mr. David Grindle, to our sanctuary. We all were grateful for his message about Advent. One point he made was: “All too often, we hear the words of John the Baptist (Luke 3:3-6: Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight paths for him...And all mankind will see God’s salvation.) 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.” Another point: “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 you and me and everyone around us. The people we like and the people we 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.” This was David Grindle’s first time at Zion and we hope he comes back!

WORSHIP ON SUNDAY, DECEMBER 12, 2021

On the third Sunday in Advent, our service will be led by the Reverend Jennifer DeWeerth and the Worship Assistant will be Mr. Fran LaGase.

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=TDJGTkwvSTBER2lNb1o1Qzd6WGxDdz09>, Meeting ID: 843 5484 0714, Password: 022654. Or by PHONE, +16465588656, 84354840714#, 1#, 022654#. To join the service **by Livestream on our YouTube channel**, you can do so by visiting our page at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWzOtbfCe2z7bIPvxp62lA>

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

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***

Kelli Watson concluded our service with the beloved hymn, *In Christ, There is No East or West*, a hymn I sang in my car all the way home. Thank you, Kelli, for that beautiful Postlude.

May we be one community of love throughout the whole wide earth,
Laurel McCurdy, Council Co-president

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The 2022 offering envelopes

Are located in the narthex. Any questions, please see Gloria Cifonelli 315-735-8077.

Poinsettias

A poinsettia can be donated in honor of or in memory of loved ones. The sign-up sheet is in the narthex. Your donation may be placed in a green envelope labeled poinsettias.

Annual Report

If you are responsible for an insert for the Annual Report, please start making your preparations and send them to office@zionluth.com. *Thank you!*

Looking for last minute Christmas gifts?

Shop at Zion's Fair Trade cart that will be downstairs in the foyer before and after church services on December 12th and 19th. You will find some bargains: flavored coffees, Body, Mind, and Soul drip coffee, and cashews for \$5.00 and English Breakfast Tea for \$2.50. Gift bags are on the bottom shelf. Thank you for supporting this ministry at Zion.

Utica College Band

Will present a Christmas concert on Sunday, December 12th, at New Hartford Presbyterian Church, 45 Genesee St., at 2:30 pm. Come join us for an afternoon of some of your favorite holiday music. You may even see a few familiar Zion faces in the band!

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. Thank you!!

ELCA World Hunger Advent Appeal

Each congregation in the Synod is challenged to donate \$300 toward this effort during the Advent season! To donate, please write "World Hunger Advent Appeal" in the note section of your check (use the green envelopes if you have them). You may mail your check to the Zion office or drop it off when you come to church on Sundays.

Advent Materials

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.*

Church Office

Zion's Church Office will be closed for the holidays on Monday, December 20th through January 3rd!

Zion Lutheran Church
New Hartford, NY
Advent 3



December 12, 2021

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

PRELUDE: *I Need Thee Every Hour*, by Robert Lowry -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: *Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn*, vs. 1 & 4 Hymn #242 -Kelli Watson

Vs. 1 Awake! Awake, and greet the new morn, for angels herald its dawning. Sing out your joy, for soon he is born, behold! The Child of our longing. Come as a baby weak and poor, to bring all hearts together, he opens wide the heav'nly door and lives now inside us forever

Vs. 4 Rejoice, rejoice, take heart in the night, though dark the winter and cheerless, the rising sun shall crown you with light, be strong and loving and fearless. Love be our song and love our prayer and love our endless story; may God fill ev'ry day we share and bring us at last into glory.

Prayer of the Day

Stir up the wills of your faithful people, Lord God, and open our ears to the preaching of John, that, rejoicing in your salvation, we may bring forth the fruits of repentance; 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

-Isabel Silva

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: Zephaniah 3:14-20 Bible Pg. #1466

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

(light two purple candles & one pink candle)

-Isabel Silva

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 ELW #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

-Isabel Silva

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: Philippians 4:4-7 Bible Pg. #1830

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Halle, Halle, Hallelujah



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: -Rev. Jennifer DeWeerth

This morning, I want to talk about the meaning of home. What do you think of when I say “home?” Home for the holidays? Hearth and home “I’ll be home for Christmas; you can count on me. Please have snow and mistletoe, and presents under the tree?” The American poet, Robert Frost, said that “Home is where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in.” There’s a lot of truth to that. And, hopefully, if we have been lucky to grow up loved or to have found a loving family one way or another, then home does mean that we find the refuge, relief, and unquestioned acceptance that we so crave.

Saint Augustine famously wrote more than 1500 years ago: “Our hearts are restless, O God, until they rest in thee.” We seek love, purpose, and belonging, and our culture tries to convince us to find those things in ways that are fleeting, materialistic, narrow, or self-centered. Many of the disappointments that we experience during the “holiday season” come from expecting a kind of Christmas full of family harmony and heartwarming scenes that occur only on the Hallmark channel. Our faith warns us against making ourselves too much at home in a world that is alienated from God—depending too much on things, our own ideals, and even the people and communities we love, to give us a home that can truly only be found in God.

In our first reading this morning, Zephaniah tells us that God’s word is this: “At that time I will bring you home...at the time when I gather you, says the Lord.” What does this word mean for us today? Even though our scripture this morning is designed to emphasize joy, the joy of being protected, forgiven, and saved, and having all our shame and pain transformed into praise, it still can’t escape the bigger picture, that the day is at hand: the ax, the winnowing fork, the fact that we have to be told not to hoard and covet and extort or lie. We struggle in our lives to do the right thing, just as we struggle to find peace and purpose, community and acceptance. Like the people who ask John the Baptist, we want to know what we should do to live right, to find God’s salvation to follow the path of righteousness.

John knows that human beings may be tempted to say, “Well, we can rest on the faith of our parents and grandparents.” But no one can walk the path of righteous love, of trust in and loyalty to God; we have to walk it for ourselves. So John says that God’s promised kingdom comes to those who bear its fruits right now—who share their coats and food, and refrain from taking more than they need. And, at the same time that we have to walk the path of righteous love for ourselves, we also cannot walk it alone. God’s word in Zephaniah, remember, is “At that time I will bring you home...at the time when I gather you.”

As we prepare for Christmas, we remember that, in the Nativity stories, Jesus is not greeted by millions, but he **was** met by small groups of people: a family, a handful of shepherds, a few travelers. Home is always experienced as a community, even when our home is in God, especially when our home is in God. When we find our home in God, we are no longer restless, and we are not alone, for we become home to one another. Not the kind of home where we expect each other to provide all our emotional needs, but the kind of home where we help each other see God, who does provide all that we need.

One of my favorite stories of home is told by Anne Lamott in her book, Traveling Mercies. She is telling about her life as if it were a slideshow. Lamott had a hard life in that she spent many years in her twenties and well past that abusing alcohol and drugs, and being pretty... lost. While she was recovering from hangovers on Sunday mornings, she would wander through the local flea market. She would sometimes hear music coming from a small, somewhat ramshackle Presbyterian church called St. Andrews between 11 and 1, and she thought the gospel singing was so beautiful that she would sometimes stand in the door to listen, and then wander in. She kept going back there and getting drawn in more and more. Over the course of the next couple of years, she got pregnant and had a baby. She had absolutely no money, and the old women in the church, themselves living on fixed incomes, would slip coins and bills into her pockets at church, and love her baby. Many of the slides in the slide show of her life, she says, would be of her and her son, Sam, and her dear friends, but then, she says also, "there would be thousands of slides of Sam and me at St. Andrews. I think we have missed church ten times in twelve years." And to explain why her little church is so important to her, how it saved her life and helped shape her transformed life with Jesus again and again, she tells a story she heard from her pastor.

When the pastor was about seven years old, her best friend got lost one day. The little girl ran up and down the streets of the big town where they lived, but she couldn't find a single landmark. She was very frightened. Finally a policeman stopped to help her. He put her in the passenger seat of his car, and they drove around until she finally saw her church. She pointed it out to the policeman, and then she told him firmly, "You can let me out now. This is my church, and I can always find my way home from here."

We are so close to being home for the holidays. Not home as a picture perfect Hallmark scene, but the place where all our expectations are really and truly met, where we repent and God rejoices, where God heals the wounded, welcomes the outcast, and changes exhaustion into renewal and shame into joy. "Yes," we say, in response to the prophets, to Zephaniah and John the Baptist, "give us a signpost in the wilderness." On the third Sunday of Advent, it's not that we're quite home yet, but that we see the landmark where we say, "Ah, we can always find our way home from here." God is gathering us together, and God is bringing us home. Amen.

Special Music:

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.

Holy God, renew your church and raise up leaders who announce your good news. Grant peace to congregations and seminarians in the midst of transition. Guide the work of candidacy and call committees. Hear us, O God.

Your mercy is great.

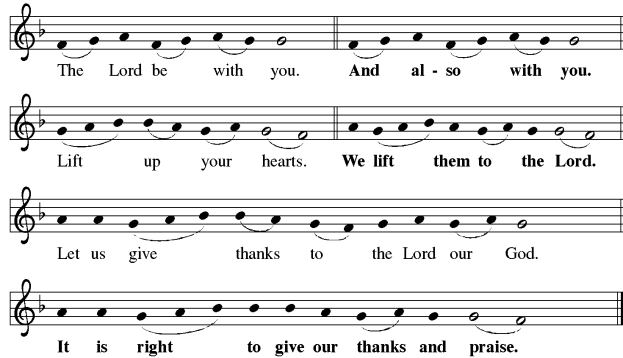
Creating God, your Spirit brought forth the earth and all that is in it. Breathe life into us, that we are inspired to live in harmony with one another and the planet. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Shepherding God, you lead your people in paths of righteousness. Raise up prophets in our own day who warn against captivity to greed and point us to the freedom found in generosity. 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.

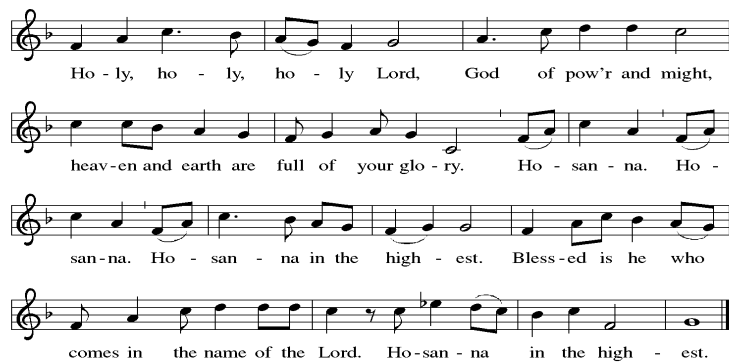
Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

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, *(Please remain seated.)*

Come to Christ's banquet. Feast on God's gift of grace.

COMMUNION

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

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION, *(Please stand, if able.)*

Most High God, you have come among us at this table. By the Spirit's power, form us to be bearers of your word, sharing gifts of mercy and grace with all, through Christ Jesus, our host and our guest. **Amen.**

SENDING

Blessing

The God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, so that we may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Christ Jesus for whom we wait. **Amen.**

Sending Song: *People, Look East, vs. 1 & 4 Hymn #248 -Kelli Watson*

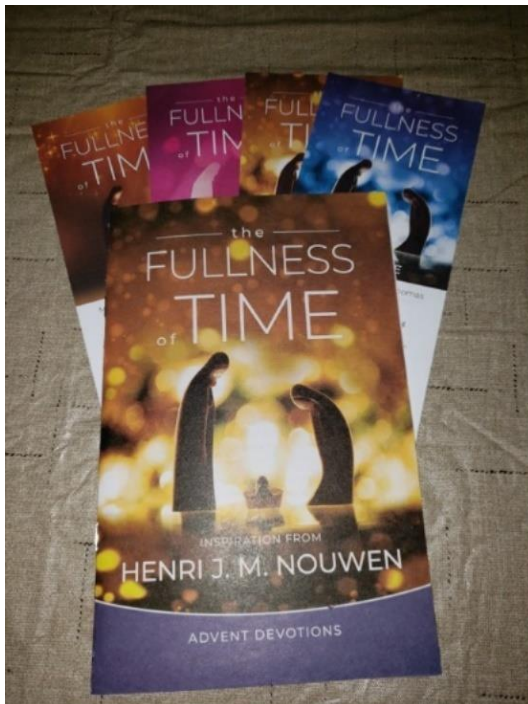
Vs. 1 People, look east. The time is near of the crowning of the year. Make your house fair as you are able, trim the hearth and set the table. People, look east, and sing today- Love, the Guest, is on the way.

Vs. 4 Angels announce with shout of mirth him who brings new life to earth. Set ev'ry peak and valley humming with the word, the Lord is coming. People, look east, and sing today-Love, the Lord, is on the way.

Dismissal

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

Postlude: *Rise Up, O Men of God!, by William H. Walter -Kelli Watson*



Advent Devotions!! Zion received copies of “*The Fullness of Time*” Advent devotions. These are available in the narthex. As it says on the back of the booklet, “*Celebrate Advent and draw closer to God through the daily reflections and prayers inspired by Scripture and spiritual writings of Henri J.M. Nouwen.*” Please feel free to take an extra copy to share with others!



Zion's Religious Artifacts V - the Smith Offering Plate

Swiss native Jacob Smith (b. 1837) immigrated to this country in 1855. His marriage records have eluded research. The U. S. Census of 1900 lists Jacob as “widowed” and living in Utica with sons William (b.1871) and Lawrence (1881). The elder Smith worked as a “day laborer,” while both sons toiled in the city’s cotton mills. When Lawrence retired, he was employed by Utica Cutlery, a company founded by Zion stalwart Jacob Agne, a prominent architect and community leader.

Baptized and confirmed at Zion, Lawrence devoted much of his life to the church. He served as the Sunday school’s assistant treasurer for decades and often arranged school picnics at Trenton Falls and other sites. He ushered, served on the council for six terms, was assistant Sunday school superintendent, and actively participated in our church’s men’s group.

On May 17, 1942, Lawrence married longtime friend Emma Aulbach, daughter of devoted Zion members Andrew and Mary Moeller Aulbach. Emma mirrored her parents’ and husband’s dedication to our church. She served as Sunday school treasurer, and anchored the Ladies Guild, Missionary Society, and Flower Mission.

Like many German-Americans and their children, the *Deutsche arbiter* (workers) who filled our congregation’s pews for decades, Emma Aulbach Smith’s career was centered in Utica’s cotton mills. Her life contained hardships that we can only imagine. The 1900 census listed Emma as a “cotton winder” in a textile factory. She was thirteen years old - and probably labored 50-60 hours/week.

Many Zion members gave memorials during our church’s renovation program of 1924-1925. The offering plate was Lawrence’s contribution.

Emma Smith entered the church triumphant on May 26, 1951; Lawrence joined his beloved on September 6, 1968.