

LEADERSHIP LETTER FOR JANUARY 9, 2022

Baptism of Our Lord

Dear Zion Family,

Since our last mailing, we have had three church services with many "joy to the world" moments. On the fourth Sunday in Advent, we listened as Deacon Patsy Glista read Mary's Song of Praise from The Message by Eugene Peterson. At the CANDLE LIGHTING CEREMONY on Christmas Eve, we heard "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shined. Arise, shine for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you." And, we sang, "Silent Night, Holy Night!" in English and German. As we celebrated the Epiphany of Our Lord, Pastor Bill Preuss reminded us of God's gift, of the angels and shepherds and the three kings, and about justice and mercy and welcoming the stranger and receiving the good news and sharing it...Then more joy as Kelli Watson played the anthem, *Mary, Did You Know?* If you are not familiar with the words, bring more joy to your life this January by finding the lyrics on line and listening to this beautiful song.

WORSHIP ATTENDANCE

December 19th: 42 in person, 18 on Zoom

Christmas Eve: 46 in person, 13 on Zoom

January 2nd: 22 in person, 12 on Zoom

IN DECEMBER, POINSETTIAS WERE GIVEN TO THE GLORY OF GOD AND IN MEMORY OF...

Bob and Julie Stone by Wendy and Mike Stevens

Jane and Jim Reed by Gail Van Slyke

Richard Scharff by Aunt Deanna Bush

Peter Scharff by Aunt Deanna Bush

Norman Glista by Patsy Glista

MaryAnn Biel by Patsy Glista

Randy Richards by Laurel McCurdy

The Altar Flowers were given to the Glory of God in memory of Diane Scharff by Deanna Bush.

THANK YOU!

Thank you to all who remained after worship on January 2nd to assist with the "Unhanging of the Greens." Your help putting away Zion's Christmas decorations was much appreciated. Many hands do make light(er) work!

SUNDAY WORSHIP IN JANUARY

Pastor Bill Preuss will lead our worship service on January 9, 2022, when we celebrate the Baptism of Our Lord.

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/UCWzOtbCe2z7bIPvxp62lA>

-On January 16th and January 30th, Deacon Patsy Glista will lead us in worship.

-On January 23rd, Zion will welcome our new Intentional Interim Pastor, Rick Klafehn.

AN INTRODUCTION TO ZION'S CONGREGATION FROM PASTOR RICK KLAFEHN

(Please note: A brief biography and a photo of Pastor Rick were included in the December 19, 2021 Newsletter)

It is my joy and privilege to join you during this transition period as your intentional interim pastor and to serve and to support you on your journey. This journey may seem like a long and winding road, and I feel for you. The pandemic has not made it easy. Let's recognize Pastor Anita Mohr for her kind and gracious, capable and steady assistance and leadership to Zion. Please join me in expressing our generous gratitude.

I look forward to learning more where Zion has been and is now in its transition and seek to keep things going as smoothly and normally as possible.

An intentional interim pastor helps a congregation affirm strengths, discover opportunities, recognize challenges, and address weaknesses.

An intentional interim pastor asks questions: How have the congregation and community changed – both prior and during the transition? What is the same? What is different?

An intentional interim pastor asks three main questions: (1) Who are we – the talents, the gifts, the interests, and the connections God has given us? (2) Who are our neighbors – and their hopes and fears and needs? (3) Where are the intersections, where we can make a life-giving difference with God's life-saving love, that is, what is God calling us to do and to become?

What is God's mission purpose and vision for Zion? What are the core values that guide how Zion makes choices and lives together? What are fitting strategies and goals to help Zion be sustainable, thrive, accomplish its mission, and grow into its vision?

How might you answer these questions?

Let us use this intentional interim period as a gift of time to provide deliberate and well-informed responses, so Zion can choose the best possible pastor (not perfect!) with the most fitting gifts and skills (not all of them!) to pursue your mission together. The role, gifts, and skills needed today and tomorrow likely are not wholly the same as those of prior pastors in past situations.

An intentional interim period allows time for grieving and healing from the sadness of saying good bye to the last pastor and the past. It can create readiness to recognize present conditions and to welcome, work with, and build a loving and positive relationship with a new pastor.

Finally, some nuts and bolts: My time with Zion begins on January 17th. I will be working ten hours in New Hartford each week, Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 10 am to 3 pm. I will also preach and lead worship two Sundays a month. I will focus on five areas: administration; worship planning and arrangement of worship supply; contact with members, especially shut-ins and the sick or hospitalized; Congregational Council meetings; and strategic planning.

Pronounce "Klafehn" so to rhyme with "refrain" (accent on second syllable)!

Please keep Zion, your Council, call committee, and all your leaders in prayer!

God's blessings!

Pastor Rick Klafehn

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 2022 Calendars are available on the table in the narthex.
- The 2022 offering envelopes are located in the narthex. Please pick them up, if you have not already done so. Any questions, please see Gloria Cifonelli.
- Annual Reports are due as soon as possible. Please send them to Sara at office@zionluth.com.
- Council will meet on January 10th at 6:30 on Zoom.

To take us to next Sunday, The Baptism of Our Lord—May 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, the Word made flesh. Amen.

Wishing you peaceful days,
Laurel McCurdy, council co-president



Zion Lutheran Church
Baptism of Our Lord



January 9, 2022

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

PRELUDE: *O Word of God Incarnate*, arr. by Harold DeCou -Kelli Watson

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, one God, who creates us, redeems us, and calls us by name. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another. Most merciful God, **We confess that we have sinned against you and your beloved children. We have turned our faces away from your glory when it did not appear as we expected. We have rejected your word when it made us confront ourselves. We have failed to show hospitality to those you called us to welcome. Accept our repentance for the things we have done and the things we have left undone. For the sake of Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us and lead us, that we may bathe in the glory of your Son born among us, and reflect your love for all creation. Amen.**

Rejoice in this good news: In Christ Jesus, your sins are forgiven. You are descendants of the Most High, adopted into the household of Christ, and inheritors of eternal life. Live as freed and forgiven children of God. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn: *Spirit of Gentleness, vs. 1 & 4 Hymn#396* -Kelli Watson

Vs. 1 Spirit, Spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness calling and free; Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea. You moved on the waters, you called to the deep, then you coaxed up the mountains from the valleys of sleep; and over the eons you called to each thing: "Awake from your slumbers and rise on your wings."

Vs. 4 Spirit, spirit of gentleness, blow through the wilderness calling and free; Spirit, Spirit of restlessness, stir me from placidness, wind, wind on the sea. You call from tomorrow, you break ancient schemes.

From the bondage of sorrow all the captives dream dreams; our women see visions, our men clear their eyes. With bold new decisions your people arise.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, you anointed Jesus at his baptism with the Holy Spirit and revealed him as your beloved Son. Keep all who are born of water and the Spirit faithful in your service, that we may rejoice to be called children of God, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading: *Isaiah 43:1-7 Bible Pg. 1126*

Second Reading: *Acts 8:14-17 Bible Pg. 1705*

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Halle, Halle, Hallelujah

Hal-le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le, hal - le, hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah. Hal - le - lu - jah.

Gospel: *Luke 3:15-17, 21-22 Bible Pg. 1594*

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

Sermon: *-Pastor Bill Preuss*

Grace, mercy and peace be yours from God the Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

How hard it is to pin God down! How impossible to put God in a box! Of course we know this – or do we? I often find myself challenged to become more expansive in my thinking, more inclusive in my vision, and open myself to knowing that God is even more, is even greater than what I had dared to previously imagine. Think that this is new? Think again.

John the baptizer comes from the wilderness to the river Jordan. It must have been quite a picture that John presented. Yet people were not put off by what they saw. No, the crowds came to where he was and were baptized, washed in the river water, repenting and accepting forgiveness. Luke connects this John with the prophecy of Isaiah. John is the “voice of one crying in the wilderness...prepare the way of the Lord.”

John’s preaching must have been dynamic. Luke records that he referred to at least some of those who came out to be baptized as a “brood of vipers”. And still they came. The people asked what they should do as sinners who now had repented – and he tells them. Tax collectors get a special hearing, soldiers too.

With all of this taking place Luke observes that the people were “in expectation”. The excitement was building. The stadium was rocking. Anticipation was rampant. At least some began to believe that John could be the Christ of God, the Messiah. The people expected a Messiah who would challenge the political order of the day. A Messiah who would recreate the “glory days” of God’s people. They had a vision, and God was expected to actualize this vision in accordance with what the people thought.

A fiery preacher coming out of the wilderness. A charismatic leader who attracted people to him. This has got to be it! He must be the real thing! And, in the verses omitted from today’s Gospel text, Luke reminds us in a moment of “flash forward” commentary, that John was eventually killed at the order of a fearful Herod.

But John is a witness. He is not the Christ. And so he tells the people this. We catch a glimpse of John’s own vision of the Christ of God. A person so much more powerful that John was not worthy to even undertake the lowliest of deeds for him... “I am not even worthy to untie his sandals!” Integral to John’s vision of the Messiah is that God is going to “clean house”. The threshing floor will be cleared! Chaff will be burned not just with fire, but with unquenchable fire.

And Jesus came out to the river with the multitude to be baptized with the others. John tells the people that he is not worthy to accomplish the least action for the Messiah, and Jesus comes to be baptized. “Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form, as a dove, and a voice came from heaven, ‘You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.’”

Enlarge your vision John – here on the banks of the Jordan – God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is manifest. Open your eyes people – Jesus from Nazareth, known as the son of a carpenter – here is the salvation of God not just for some but for all people. Here is the one whose kingdom is “not from this world” – the Roman rulers whom the people expected to be overthrown; they are nothing but “small fish”. It is evil and darkness that is to be defeated.

I will not fault the people on the banks of the Jordan for having too limited an understanding of God, or a too small vision of what God was bringing to God’s creation right in their very midst. I won’t do this, because as I said before, I regularly find myself challenged to expand my vision of God because it is always too small, too limited. Truly the God we know is a living God! Not just the God of yesterday...not just the God of today...but the God of yesterday, today and tomorrow. In Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the vastness of God is revealed.

In the Baptism of Jesus as recorded by Luke we witness the power of God, the same power of God that washes over us when we are born again as God’s children in Baptism. This is so much more than what is expected or deserved. And so, my friends, as we journey through this Season of Epiphany, let the manifestation of God grow in your lives, so that the greatness of God, the power of God, the living presence of God is known by your witness in this living community of faith, and flowing from this community into the world, today. Amen.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

ANTHEM: *Spirit of God, Descend upon My Heart, by Frederick C. Atkinson -Kelli Watson*

Prayers of Intercession

The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made.

By the Holy Spirit, you gather your church and send it out in mission to share the good news of Jesus. Inspire your faithful people to be fervent in prayer and service, that all people know they are precious in God's sight. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

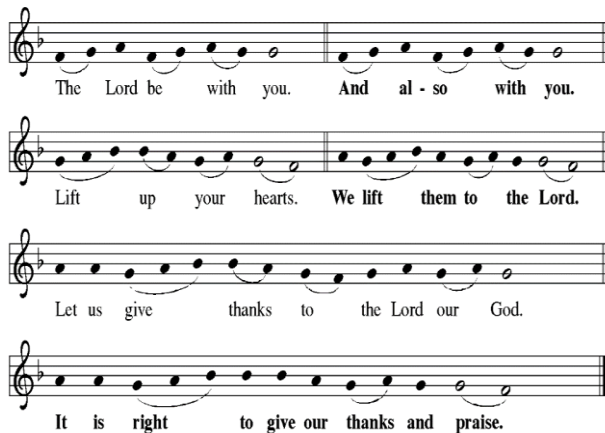
Establish among the nations the blessings of peace. Raise up leaders who will protect vulnerable people in their care. Strengthen advocates who risk reputation or retaliation for the sake of mercy and justice. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We are joined in baptism to Christ and to one another. Bless those who are newly baptized and those who are preparing for baptism. Help us to be faithful in fellowship, worship, evangelism, service, and justice-seeking. God of grace, **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, Jackie and Skip, students and teachers, and Theresa, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all of our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior. **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.

PREFACE

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

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.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION,

Come to God's table. There is a place for you and enough for all.

COMMUNION

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

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We give you thanks, gracious God, for we have feasted on the abundance of your house. Send us to bring good news and to proclaim your favor to all, strengthened with the richness of your grace in your Son, Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

SENDING

Blessing

God, who leads you in pathways of righteousness, who rejoices over you, and who calls you by name, bless your going out and your coming in, today and forever. **Amen.**

Sending Song: *Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized, vs. 1 & 4 Hymn#304 -Kelli Watson*

Vs. 1 Christ, when for us you were baptized, God's Spirit on you came, as peaceful as a dove, and yet as urgent as a flame, as urgent as a flame.

Vs. 4 Baptize us with your Spirit, Lord; your cross on us be signed, that likewise in God's service we may perfect freedom find, may perfect freedom find.

Dismissal

Go with Christ into a weary world. Share the good news. **Thanks be to God.**

Postlude: *Lord, Dismiss Us with Thy Blessing, arr. by Harold DeCou -Kelli Watson*



Christmas Greetings from Weilimdorf, Germany!

Edeltraud John, historian of St. Oswald's Lutheran Church, sent us photos of two Christmas trees - one in the sanctuary, the other in Weilimdorf's market square. In return, Zion emailed pictures of our Christmas Eve chancel to Edeltraud's congregation. This beautiful tradition has endured for six years. May it last forever.

We enjoy a special bond with the good people of St. Oswald's. Zion's founder, Pastor Andrew (Johann Andreas) Wetzell, was baptized and confirmed in that church. Historical material about Pastor Andrew has regularly flowed back and forth across the Atlantic, to the enrichment of all. St. Oswald's members are very proud that "Father Wetzell," as he was known, started the tradition of placing decorated Christmas trees in Upstate New York's churches. Several ornaments on Zion's 2021 Christmas tree were gifts from our German brethren.

St. Oswald's flock did not expect to have a Christmas tree this year. Germany has legislated strict Covid regulations, which were slightly eased on 12/20. Edeltraud included the following telltale note with the photos:

"Surprise, wonderful surprise! Only three days ago we were finally allowed to have a Christmas tree, but we are only permitted to have 40 worshippers in the church. They all have to be registered, too, as having been vaccinated. Our members must keep their distance and wear masks. Many more people want to be at St. Oswald's on Christmas Eve.

But we are glad and very thankful. After Christmas, there will be stricter rules because of Corona mutations. We hope and pray that conditions will improve in 2022.

Very best wishes to all of you at Zion from the *Evangelische Oswaldgemeinde* (St. Oswald's congregation) in Weilimdorf!

