

February Newsletter

To Our Zion Family:

Sunday's gospel reading, Mark Ch. 1:14-20, tells the story of Jesus beginning to gather his disciples: first Simon and his brother, Andrew, then James and his brother, John—all fishermen. They were casting their nets at the Sea of Galilee when Jesus came upon them and called, "Come, follow me and I will send you out to fish for people." According to Mark's gospel, they immediately left their nets to follow Jesus. It must have taken real courage and a genuine "leap of faith" to leave the life they knew to follow Jesus with so many unknowns. As Rev. Janet reminded us in her sermon on Sunday, "Jesus says, the kingdom of God is NOW. To follow is to live as if we believe this is true." Jesus is calling us to follow Him. His kingdom isn't only out there on the horizon, it is also right here and right now. Are we ready to answer His call?

Announcements and updates:

-This Sunday we will continue with our remote worship practice, offering the opportunity to attend the service **via Zoom, livestreamed on Facebook, or by using the printed Service of the Word**, which you will find later in this mailing.

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwwSTBER2lNb1o1Qzd6WGxDdz09>

Meeting ID: 843-5484 0714, Password: 022654. Or by PHONE, One tap mobile, +6465588656, 84354840714#, 1#, 022654# US (New York) If you would prefer to **view the service via livestream** on our YouTube channel, you can do so by visiting our page at:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWzOtfbCe2z7-bIPvxp621A>.

-Unfortunately, the upcoming Jan. 31st service, originally scheduled to be offered in-person (and, as usual, via Zoom, livestreamed, and with the Service of the Word), **will not take place in-person** due to the continuing high positivity infection rates in Oneida County (and around the country). We hope that our next in-person worship, scheduled for Feb. 28th, will find us together in Zion's sanctuary.

-Our Annual Congregational Meeting will take place on Sunday, Feb. 7, 2021, at 11:00 AM,

following the 10:00 AM service and a few minutes of "joyful chaos." This meeting will take place via the Zoom platform given the ongoing pandemic risks. If you attend the 10:00 AM service that morning, you'll just stay on the Zoom link from the service to the Annual Congregational Meeting. For those who do not have access to a computer, you can attend this Zoom meeting by using your phone. To join, follow the same directions as for joining the service via phone. If you need assistance in understanding how to use your phone to connect, please call Sara at the office (315-732-4110) to let her know. Kristen Burson will call you and walk you through the steps to connect to this meeting using your phone. For those who would like, we will also make the meeting available on the big screen TV in the Fireside Room. We will require anyone wanting to participate in the meeting in this way to call Sara and reserve a spot in the Fireside Room. Masks and social distancing will be required. We want everyone to have the opportunity to attend.

-The Annual Report for our Congregational Meeting- Those who receive the Service of the Word via USPS should have received their copy of the Annual Report by this time (it was mailed on January 22nd). For those who receive the Service of the Word via email, your annual report was emailed on January 25th. If you receive Zion correspondence via email but would like a hard copy of the Annual Report, or if for some reason you did not receive your copy or have any questions, please call Sara at Zion's office (315-732-4110) or email her at office@zionluth.com. The Annual Report will also be available when you drop off cans of soup at church for our "Souper Bowl" tradition on Feb. 6th from 10-noon. Please see pages 2 and 7 for more details about our "Souper Bowl."

-As a reminder, if you make your **stewardship** contributions by using the **envelopes** provided by the church, they are now available in the downstairs coat room for you to pick up. If you would prefer not to come to the church due to health concerns, please call Sara at the office (315-732-4110) and we can arrange to have them delivered/mailed to you. Thanks to everyone for their continued stewardship contributions during the pandemic!

-Thanks to the generosity of the Zion congregation, **the debt that financed the bathroom renovations has been retired**. We have made significant progress in reducing **the remaining \$25,000 debt on the roof**. We appreciate the continued fulfillment of your pledges to retire this remaining roof debt.

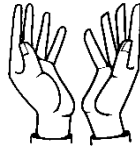
-We are saddened to report that **the Joslyn family has experienced the loss of another family member**. In addition to the passing of Peggy Joslyn on Jan. 16th, we have just learned that John Joslyn, Peggy and Paul's son, passed away earlier today (Monday, January 25th). John had been hospitalized and on life-support for a number of weeks. The family plans to hold a service for Peggy and John in the spring. We will notify our Zion family once those arrangements are finalized. Please keep the Joslyn family and their friends in your prayers.

-As reported in Sunday's "joyful chaos," Shawn Lockwood has submitted his **resignation from the technologist position**. Shawn's last day will be this Sunday, Jan. 31st. We thank Shawn for the seven months he served us as Zion's technologist to make attending our Sunday Zoom service easier and available. If you know anyone who might be interested in this role, which usually entails 3-4 hours/week, mostly on Sunday mornings, please contact Mark.

-We are **continuing a Zion tradition with the 2021 "Drive-Up" Souper Bowl!** On Saturday, February 6th, from 10 am until 12 noon, bring your cans of soup to the main entrance at Zion. Just pop the trunk or open the hatch for a "touch-free" drop off. All soup donated will support local food ministries. A monetary donation can be sent in with your normal offering designated for "Souper Bowl" or "Food Bank". Thanks for helping out our community! If we pay attention, looking and listening closely, we might well find the message of scripture in the most unusual and unanticipated places. Rev. Janet helped us see that when, in her Sunday sermon, she quoted the words of Dr. Seuss from *Oh, the Places You'll Go!* "You're off to great places, you're off and away. You have brains in your head, you have feet in your shoes. Here's the good news—you're not alone, and you know what you know, and you know the one who'll decide where you'll go." In all of our days ahead, let us listen for the Lord's call to bring Him more fully into the world. As we so often say here at Zion, "God's work, our hands."

Wishing you peace and good health in the week ahead,
Mark Thompson and Kristen Burson, council co-presidents

4 Epiphany – January 31, 2021



SERVICE OF THE WORD
GATHERING

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, one God, whose voice is upon the waters, whose mercy is poured out upon all people, whose goodness cascades over all creation. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin, trusting in the abundant grace of God.

Holy God, you search us and know us. You are acquainted with all our ways. We confess that our hearts are burdened by sin— our own sins and the broken systems that bind us. We turn inward, failing to follow your outward way of love. We distrust those who are not like us. We exploit the earth and its resources and fail to consider generations to come. Forgive us, gracious God, for all we have done and left undone. Even before the words are on our tongues, you know them; receive them in your divine mercy. **Amen.**

How vast is God's grace! Through the power and promise of ✠ Christ Jesus, our sins are washed away, and we are claimed as God's own beloved. Indeed, we are forgiven. In the wake of God's forgiveness, we are called to be the beloved community living out Christ's justice and the Spirit's reconciling peace. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn: *Arise Your Light Has Come! vs. 1 & 4 Hymn #314 –Kelli Watson*

Vs. 1 Arise, your light has come! The Spirit's call obey; show forth the glory of your God which shines on you today.

Vs. 4 Arise, your light has come! The mountains burst in song! Rise up like eagles on the wing, God's pow'r will make us strong.

Prayer of the Day

Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Savior. Bring wholeness to all that is broken and speak truth to us in our confusion, that all creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Gospel: Mark 1:21-28

Sermon: *-Rev. Jennifer DeWeerth*

They say that each of the four Gospel writers sends a message about the main themes of their gospel by what they highlight as Jesus' first public act of ministry. In Matthew, that's the Sermon on the Mount, in Luke, it's his sermon in Nazareth that gets him driven out of town, and in John, the wedding at Cana. In Mark, we have an exorcism. We may tend to think about the Gospel of Mark, and really the other Gospels as well, as being filled with Jesus teaching, healing people, feeding people, and welcoming people, but the very first story about Jesus' public ministry in Mark is about how he casts out an unclean spirit from a man possessed.

This is a hard story, I think, for us today. We definitely don't have the same worldview that Mark, or his audience, did, and so we are not exactly sure how to approach this passage. Should we assume that the "possession" in this story is a misunderstanding of an illness we now better understand, such as epilepsy or a mental illness like schizophrenia or a severe personality disorder? Or do we take this story as it is and explore the various ways that we, in our own bodies and souls, our own lives and communities, struggle with powers and evils that oppose God and have the potential to control us and misdirect us from all the good that God wants for us?

For me, I used to dismiss "possession" as a hopelessly ancient misunderstanding of the world, just too foreign to our own modern experience, and I tried to avoid the difficult Gospel stories about it. That's not what I think now. It's not that I

understand fully what is going on with this unclean spirit possessing the man in the story, it's just that I can find examples in my own life, in myself and in people I know have seen or heard about, who have been in the grips of this kind of power. And what matters is not trying to define exactly what this spirit is, or trying to figure out what combination of spiritual, psychological, or cultural dimensions are at play. What really matters is the devastating impact on the human being whose body, whose self, this unclean spirit possesses. This is how one writer sums up the impact on the man Jesus encounters in this story: "the man had no voice of his own~the spirit spoke for him. The man had no control over his body~the spirit convulsed him. The man had no community~the spirit isolated him. And the man had no dignity~the spirit dehumanized him."

Maybe none of us can relate to so totalizing an experience, but surely parts of this come close to home. First, this demon possession is not something that happens to Jesus in an opioid den or a bad neighborhood on the edge of town, or in a foreign land late at night, or in the 1st century equivalent of a psychiatric hospital. The whole story takes place among some of his own people, in the synagogue where the faithful are gathered. The unclean spirit inhabits the body, the soul, of a regular synagogue goer! This is about all of us.

If we understand possession as a powerful force working not just outside but within us that pushes us away from love and peace and threatens our integrity, our wholeness, even to the point where we do damage to ourselves or others, then it doesn't seem so crazy, does it? Have you ever been set upon by such consuming anger that you could barely speak, and lost sight of the relationship you had with the person standing before you? I have. Have you experienced a time in your life when the loudest voice in your head did not affirm God's love for you, but instead diminished and wounded you with feelings of worthlessness and shame? What about losing agency over your own decisions or your bodily movements? Of course, the classic example of possession by an unclean spirit in our society is addiction, whether to alcohol, drugs, gambling, or pornography. These addictions suck up joy and relationships, all the good things that God wants for human lives, and they spit out nothing but destruction and despair.

Then there are the more socially acceptable addictions that sometimes do the very same thing: obsession with physical perfection, workaholicism, social media addictions to closed off worlds of lies and conspiracy. We could also talk about the many large structural forces that possess and ravage us at the societal level~racism, homophobia, greed feeding runaway economic inequality, violence and war, excessive materialism, individualism, nationalism~countless obsessions that eat up the fullness of life that God desires for us.

Even though it makes sense to me to point to the damaging social forces that tear us apart and wreak havoc in our world when we talk about "possession," it is also interesting to me that, in this very first story of what Jesus is about in the world, Jesus is face to face with an individual human being. On the one hand, we have the Holy Spirit that blesses Jesus at his baptism and affirms him. On the other hand, we have the *unclean* spirit that approaches Jesus in the synagogue, and whom Jesus engages and calls out. If these two spirits are battling throughout the first chapter of Mark, the *battlefield is the individual human being's body*. To me, this says something very basic about the good news: that God, through Jesus, is willing to go into battle for every single one of us, for every human life, in our own selves, right to the parts inside of us where the greatest struggle lies.

Maybe the word battlefield is not quite right, because it makes it seem inherently violent. But make no mistake that we live in what could be called a "contested space." There are forces of evil trying to gain ground in our daily lives and win our allegiance, and in that space is also all that God hopes and intends for us. The issue is this: **are we alone in that space, fending for ourselves? Mark's answer is no.** Jesus doesn't just wow his audience with words; he shows them that he is willing to enter over into that contested space and stay with them in it.

In fact, what Mark is trying to do throughout his whole Gospel, from the moment that he describes the heavens as torn open at Jesus' baptism, is to show that Jesus, the One of God, is about *crossing boundaries, and breaking boundaries*. Why is the unclean spirit possessing this man concerned about Jesus, so much so that he calls out to him? Because the unclean spirits recognize right from the first that Jesus will not hesitate to get into the ring, to enter into this contested space, where evil powers are doing their work. And Jesus did not flinch when the unclean spirit called out to him. How often do we accommodate unclean spirits, capitulate to them, make compromises, avoid them, or look away? It's so easy to look away from these painful struggles, but Jesus doesn't. I love this way of putting it: "Jesus' brand of holiness didn't require him to keep his hands clean." The unclean spirit asks; "What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazareth?" His answer? Everything. I have *everything* to do with you." Where pain is, darkness is, despair is, there God is. There is no place God will not go to liberate us. There is no boundary that God will not cross to free us from the unclean spirits that seek to do us ill, that still possess us, when God just wants to bless us.

If this story still makes us a bit uncomfortable with its talk of possession and unclean spirits, I think that's okay. Our lives are messy and complex, too. This is not a simple matter of "Jesus will take care of it, and everything will be okay." The powers and evils of darkness do real harm, and they leave their mark on us. We all struggle with what could be called unclean spirits. Half our prayers are probably expressions of those struggles. But there is power in naming them, and knowing that, even though they exist, they don't have to have ultimate power over us.

My favorite part of this whole strange story is that *twice* it tells us that the audience is "astounded" or "amazed" by Jesus. In a story about a loud, confrontational, and convulsive spirit, it is *Jesus*~his message and actions~ that astonish and amaze his audience! Can we still be astounded and amazed by the teaching of Jesus, by what he is doing among us? We are so, so easily dazzled by the crazy manipulations of the unclean spirit, its loud voice. We are mesmerized by the inflammatory headline, the over the top excesses. Our addictions, our demons, the unclean things that seek to contort and control us~ these can suck up all the air in the room, suck up all the energy in our lives just like they suck up all the airtime on our TVs and the screen time on our phones. And so it is easy, in comparison, to find the stories about Jesus familiar or stale, worship boring, and prayer tedious.

As we enter this year of reading the Gospel of Mark, what would happen if we heard each week's scripture reading as *astounding*? What if we were more amazed by the stories of Jesus than by the latest news flash, imploding celebrity, or tweet? What if we, like the unclean spirit, recognized Jesus as the Holy One of God, but *also jumped into the ring with him*, clung to him, and trusted him with our whole lives, amazed, astounded, and freed? 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 It is Well, arr. by Jim Brickman -Kelli Watson

Prayers of Intercession

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

For all who share the gospel and proclaim freedom in Christ throughout the world: prophets, teachers, pastors, deacons, and lay leaders; for the church and its ministries, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit: those who are sick and hospitalized, those living with HIV/AIDS, those struggling with mental illness, those who are hungry or homeless, and all in any need; for caregivers, hospice workers, and home health aides, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For the concerns of this congregation: those who travel, those absent from worship, those celebrating birthdays or anniversaries; for the people of God in this place and for other needs in our community, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Listen to the cries of your people waiting patiently for your healing hand and comforting Spirit, especially those who suffer with chronic pain and all cancer patients, Pr. Mary Etta, Gail, comfort for Patsy and the friends and family of Norm, Claudia T., Bill & Rusty, David Hunter, Don & Wanda, comfort for the Joslyn family, comfort for the family and friends of John Joslyn, Joyce Maher, Rosemary, Mark R., Kelly, Edween Ham, Claudia & Fran, Beth, Edie Marie, Suzee, Ed and family, prayers for Michael Gilleece and family, Your Neighbors clients, Theresa, and our country, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**

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.

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

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

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

Blessing

God the creator strengthen you; Jesus the beloved fill you; and the Holy Spirit the comforter ✠ keep you in peace. **Amen.**

Dismissal

Go in peace. Be the light of Christ. **Thanks be to God.**

Thank you for worshipping with us today.

Notes of Gratitude:

I would like to say thank you for your generous donation of \$371.00. Your commitment to helping Veterans in need within our community is sincerely appreciated. We have been able to supply holiday food baskets for the holidays to over 175 veterans that served over 420 individuals.

Vincent Scalise, Founder/Executive Director, Veterans Outreach Center

Dear Friends at Zion Lutheran Church,

Thank you for your beautiful letter and for making 23 children very happy this Christmas. We focused on the 23 oldest young people at the center. These are the ones who have outgrown dolls and fire trucks but who love to pick out their own gifts. They were so excited to receive the gift cards, and of course we notified their parents so that they could supervise the purchase. You came up with a wonderful solution for a very different Christmas. We pray that your congregation, like so many others, can return to weekly services.

Gratefully,

Jane Dominique, Executive Director, Thea Bowman House

Dear Wendy and Zion Lutheran Church Members,

Thank you for your generous donation of \$133.12 to our Food Pantry. This extra bag of groceries for many, is the only way they would have a meal. Your support helps us brighten and touch their lives.

Kind regards,

Valerie Montalbano, Grace Church Administrative Assistant, St. Margaret's Food Pantry

HELP CONTINUE A ZION TRADITION OF HELPING LOCAL FOOD MINISTRIES



**SATURDAY
FEB. 6
10 AM
'TIL
NOON**

**BRING YOUR CANS OF SOUP TO ZION'S MAIN
ENTRANCE FOR A TOUCH-FREE DROP-OFF**

We are continuing a Zion tradition with the 2021 "Drive-Up" Souper Bowl! On Saturday February 6 from 10 am until 12 noon, bring your cans of soup to the main entrance at Zion. Just pop the trunk or open the hatch for a "touch-free" drop off. All soup donated will support local food ministries. A monetary donation can be sent in with your normal offering designated for "Souper Bowl" or "Food Bank". Thanks for helping our community!

The announcement can be cut out and placed on your refrigerator as a reminder.

February Birthdays – Happy Birthday from your Zion family!

Wishing you a wonderful day & a blessed year ahead.

Ken Tompkins	2	Kristen Burson	19
Matt LaFave	4	Cheryl Edmiston	19
Suzee Rowland	5	Ronna Kelly	19
James Daly	7	Carter Fancher	19
Judy Schmitt	7	Jim Millbower	19
Thomas Bender	10	Leland Buell	21
Barbara Coleman	10	Sandra McGlynn	23
Annie Grove	12	Marty Pughe	24
Sheron Miller	13	Diana Inserra	26
Ellen Smith	16	Ted McCarthy	27

Given to the Glory of God

<u>In Memory of:</u>	<u>To:</u>	<u>Given by:</u>
Janet Burton	Memorial Fund	Doris Hennings
Oscar "Ozzie" Meneses	Memorial Fund	Doris Hennings
Klara Kohlbrenner	Memorial Fund	Doris Hennings
George Thompson	Memorial Fund	Doris Hennings
Eugene White	Memorial Fund	Doris Hennings
Janet Burton	Building Fund	Laura Hilt
Janet Burton	Roof Fund	The Gene White Family
Norman Glista	Memorial Fund	Ed & Carole Grove
Norman Glista	Roof Fund	Bob & Bonnie Loomis
Doris & Walter Miga	Christmas Offering	Jeanne Gymburch
Norman Glista	Building Fund	Laurel McCurdy
Norman Glista	Memorial Fund	Rev. David Preisinger
Norman Glista	Memorial Fund	Scott Leonard
Norman Glista	Memorial Fund	Fred E. Risser
Norman Glista	Memorial Fund	Gregory H. May
Janet Burton, Diane Kulik, Paul Douglass, Donna Ferenti, Klara Kohlbrenner, Oscar Meneses, Robert Imobersteg, George Thompson, and Paul Van Allen	Memorial Fund	Laurel McCurdy
<u>In Honor of:</u>	<u>To:</u>	<u>Given by:</u>
Wanda & Don Gregory	Building Fund	Laurel McCurdy
Gloria Cifonelli	Building Fund	Laurel McCurdy
Kristen Burson & Mark Thompson	Building Fund	Laurel McCurdy
Linda Bennett	World Hunger	Laurel McCurdy
Carole Grove	Your Neighbors	Laurel McCurdy
Sarah and Rick Hartman & Hallie and Ethan Myers	Roof Fund	Bob & Bonnie Loomis
Laurel McCurdy	Food Pantry	Doris Hennings
Mae Parker	Food Pantry	Doris Hennings
Gloria Cifonelli	Food Pantry	Doris Hennings
Linda Bennett	World Hunger	Laurel McCurdy
Kristen Burson	Food Pantry	Don & Wanda Gregory
Mark Thompson	Food Pantry	Don & Wanda Gregory

Compassionate God, you gather the whole universe into your radiant presence and continually reveal your Son as our Savior. Bring wholeness to all that is broken and speak truth to us in our confusion, that all creation will see and know your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen. (ELW pg. 23)