

## Pentecost 10 Leadership Letter

Dear Friends, it's amazing how words preached 2000 years ago have so much relevance for us and our lives in the 21st century. I pray that these words will encourage you in your lives of discipleship. Pastor Janet

Day 1 Read Matt 6:14-15 Imagine a world in which forgiveness is the breath of life—a world where walls of anger and resentment crumble as mercy and understanding stir the air. Jesus is speaking here to disciples—who even as they say “yes” to God are made new. The slates are clean, and they need not look over their shoulders to see if past wrongs are pursuing them. So—as they live in this new place~ they are to operate from the same source of grace. Reality means we say words we regret; we do things we shouldn't, which hurt others, we don't do things that might help. God's forgiveness gives us the courage to keep going despite failures and sin. We have also been hurt by others—yet Jesus says we aren't to keep score or seek revenge but, as citizens of a new world, we are to extend forgiveness to others. Is it easy? No. Is it possible? Yes, if we ask God to work forgiveness through us.

Day 2 Read Matthew 6:16-18 Most of us don't have a problem drawing attention to ourselves through fasting. This advice to fast quietly and secretly seems almost unnecessary to us—not because we are already doing it, but because fasting may be the least practiced spiritual discipline for 21st century Christians! Oh, we are good at dieting (or at least thinking about dieting), but fasting is another matter. Yet, next to prayer, it is one of the most common forms of personal worship talked about in scripture. Fasting is emptying ourselves so that God can fill us. It means sacrificing comfort for a period of time so that our focus is not on what we will eat, but what God is doing for us. As we feel the hunger pangs and fight the temptation to eat—just a little—we remember the hunger of our brothers and sisters. We can use the time we would have spent preparing and eating food in prayer. Fasting is placing our lives in God's hands, knowing that all of our life comes from God and trusting that God will give us what we need.

Day 3 Read Matthew 6:19-21 A favorite discussion starter goes something like this: If you were in a disaster and could only save five of your possessions, what would you choose? What do you treasure most? We all have things that matter to us—grandma's patchwork quilt, a wedding album, a stamp collection, woodworking tools, favorite paintings. There is nothing wrong with enjoying material possessions. The problem comes when what we own begins to own us. When the largest part of our time and energy is spent in collecting and protecting things, God begins to come in second place. This teaching is difficult for many Americans, for we are a people of property. We measure success and happiness by the amount of stuff we have. Yet Jesus' words remind us that we would do better to spend our time enjoying God rather than enjoying goods. All of our “stuff” is temporary—none of it will last forever, but God's love is from the beginning and forevermore.

Day 4 Read Matthew 6:22-23 In the ancient world, people believed that the eye illuminated the world—that the light in us was reflected upon the people and places around us. While our science tells us otherwise, Jesus' words still inform us. If we look at the world with generosity and joy—that's what the world will look like. If we look at the world with suspicion and fear—the world will be a place of darkness and despair. Our outlook on life makes a difference. Disciples know that and refuse to give in to hopelessness. Just for today, let the light of your faith direct your eyes so that you see the wonder and beauty in the ordinary. See the hope that lives at the heart of even the darkest pain. You are the light of the world.

Day 5 Read Matthew 6:24 We value a balanced life—one where work and family and fun and God all have a part. Yet this verse sets balance aside. “You can't compartmentalize your life,” Jesus says. You can't live one sort of life Monday-Friday and another on Sunday. If we try to please society and God, we will fail at both. God didn't create us to be comfortable straddling a fence. We are to plant both feet firmly on the side of God so that whether we are at work or school, in a board meeting or on the soccer field, participating in a worship service or watching television, all we do has God at the heart of it. We can live “the good life” or we can live a good life. The choice is yours.

Day 6 Read Matthew 6: 25-26 I read this passage and I want to say: Yeah, but it's easy for the birds. They don't have credit card bills and tuition payments and mortgages and property taxes. If I don't worry about these things, who will? The reality of our life is that we do have responsibilities to meet, people to take care of, work to do. Jesus, however, calls us to remember that ultimately our life is in God's hands. We need not spend restless nights or anxious days consumed with worry. God has already given us gifts of intelligence and humor and strength—what we are to do is place them at God's disposal, trusting that, through us, God will provide what we need. Don't worry—trust God.

## Information and Updates for the Week Ahead:

-Please join us for worship this **Sunday at 10:00 AM**. **This Sunday's worship service on the Zoom** platform continues for those with internet access via computer, tablet, smart phone, or through the **livestream** of youtube. Those who choose to call in to listen from their phone. You can also continue participating in Zion's virtual Sunday 10:00 AM worship service by utilizing the **Service of the Word template** provided later in this newsletter. Feel free to use the Service of the Word at any time if you aren't able to join us in spirit at 10:00 AM on Sunday.

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

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwvSTBER2lNb1o1Qzd6WGxDdz09> Meeting ID: 843-5484 0714, Password: 022654. Or by PHONE, One tap mobile, +16465588656, 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/UCWzOtbfcE2z7-bIPvxp62lA>. Thanks, Shawn, for developing this option!

-The most recent draft of the **Ministry Site Profile (MSP)** has been submitted to Dean Wolling. This is the first step in the call process for Zion. Personally, I am grateful for the engagement and leadership of Zion members as we have developed this document. We have reflected on who we are as a congregation and who we are called to be, developed and articulated our mission and vision, and patiently engaged in the process of discerning how God is calling us to serve. The work of the ministry site profile team, the call committee, and council, in addition to input from many Zion members was essential in accomplishing this first big step in the call process! The next step will be for the Synod to contact the call committee with pastoral candidates based on the congregational priorities and needs expressed in our MSP.

-The Task Force performed a "walk through" of the church on Tuesday evening, following and testing the protocol that has been developed for a return to in-person worship. Sara Silva is ordering the needed supplies to prepare: a hand sanitizing station, thermometer, and more. Technology needs to integrate digital and in-person congregants are also being assessed. If you would like to contribute financially to support the preparations, you can do so through [tithe.ly](https://tithe.ly) or by mailing your contribution to Zion. Council will continue to consult with the task force each month to determine an appropriate date to return to in-person worship. The health and safety of our Zion church family, both in a physical sense and in a spiritual sense, remain the highest priority.

-*This Call's For You* is the theme of our **summer Bible study (via Zoom)**. Janet Hoover leads this study each Thursday from 7:30-8:30 pm. Here is the link to join:

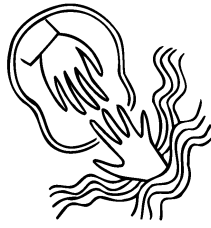
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83302013288?pwd=cGpwTnYwMjduMk96OE0rQXVNTTREQT09>. Meeting ID: 833 0201 3288. Password: 834215. Hope to "see" you there!

-We ask for your prayers for Rusty Pentland, who is in the hospital at St. Luke's. We are also continuing to pray for Fran King.

This week I have been reflecting on Pastor Janet's message: even as we plan, we need to be open to divine interruptions as God redirects our steps. Let's look for and embrace those divine interruptions this week as we continue to care for each other and our community.

The peace and blessings of our loving God be with each of us.

Kristen Burson and Mark Thompson  
Church Council co-presidents



SERVICE OF THE WORD  
GATHERING

**WELCOME**

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, ☩ one God, whose steadfast love is everlasting, whose faithfulness endures from generation to generation. **Amen.**

Trusting in the mercy of God, let us confess our sin.

Reconciling God,

**We confess that we do not trust your abundance, and we deny your presence in our lives. We place our hope in ourselves and rely on our own efforts. We fail to believe that you provide enough for all. We abuse your good creation for our own benefit. We fear difference and do not welcome others as you have welcomed us. We sin in thought, word, and deed. By your grace, forgive us; through your love, renew us; and in your Spirit, lead us; so that we may live and serve you in newness of life. Amen.**

Beloved of God, by the radical abundance of divine mercy we have peace with God through ☩ Christ Jesus, through whom we have obtained grace upon grace. Our sins are forgiven. Let us live now in hope. For hope does not disappoint, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

**THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM**

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

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

**Opening Hymn:** *Eternal Father, Strong to Save* # 756, Verses 1 & 2 –Mary Senn

**Vs. 1** Eternal Father, strong to save, whose arm has bound the restless wave, who bade the mighty ocean deep its own appointed limits keep: oh, hear us when we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea.

**Vs. 2** O Savior, whose almighty word the winds and waves submissive heard, who walked upon the foaming deep, and calm amid the storm didst sleep: oh, hear us when we cry to thee for those in peril on the sea.

**Prayer of the Day**

O God our defender, storms rage around and within us and cause us to be afraid. Rescue your people from despair, deliver your sons and daughters from fear, and preserve us in the faith of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen**

**THE WORD**

**First Reading:** 1 Kings 19:9-18

**Second Reading:** Romans 10:5-15

**Gospel:** Matthew 14:22-33

**Sermon:** *Matthew 14: 22-33* –Rev. Jennifer DeWeerth

I have a lot more questions than answers about our Gospel reading from Matthew this week. It's a dramatic story for sure. The boat and Jesus walking on water, and then Peter trying to do so, but it may be easy to misread it, and so I am going to apply two important techniques for understanding the story as a way to guide us.

First, rather than read this passage in isolation, we want to look at what happened just before this story and afterwards. Second, since it is not the first time in Matthew's gospel that Jesus has the disciples get into a boat to go to the other side and something dramatic happens, we want to look at the previous story found in Matthew 8, where Jesus stills the storm, and see if there are any similarities and differences that we should notice.

So first, when does this story happen in Matthew's narrative? Remember last week's Gospel reading –the feeding of the 5000 with five loaves and two fish? Well, we pick it right up from there. Jesus has been healing and teaching and then finds out that his cousin and close friend, John, has been killed. Then he overrules the disciples who want to flee the crowds and, instead, orchestrates a mass feeding of the hungry masses.

Afterwards, perhaps exhausted, Jesus puts the disciples in a boat, sends away the remaining crowd, and goes up the mountain for rest and retreat. Well into the night, what might be considered very early morning, the boat has been battered by winds, and is far from shore. There is not a great storm, or at least it's not the winds that cause fear for the disciples, as it was in the story in Matthew 8. No, in our story today, it is Jesus, coming toward them, walking on the water that scares the disciples. He looks like a ghost to them.

Jesus reassures them, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." **Question 1. Why is it not enough for us to be assured by Jesus that he is with us?** I don't know, but it just sometimes isn't. Here is Peter, answering Jesus, "Lord, *if it is you*, command me to come to you on the water." Why is he challenging Jesus, after all this time they have spent together, to prove himself to Peter? But Jesus does invite him to come. Jesus always invites: "Come, come, my children." Peter gets out of the boat, begins walking on the water toward Jesus. He soon discovers that it is one thing to be battered by strong winds while in the same boat with your shipmates. It is a whole other matter to be on the water surrounded by strong winds and all by yourself, without others who share in the same vulnerability. The last time there was a lot of wind on the sea, everyone was in the boat together; Jesus, though asleep, and all the disciples. This time, Jesus and Peter were not "in the same boat," Peter was in the boat, together with the disciples, and Jesus had addressed them all as he came toward them.

Why is Peter in a rush to leave his shipmates and join Jesus? Rather than wait for Jesus to join them in the boat, he wants to reach Jesus first. Or maybe he wants to take a leap of faith. Maybe he wants to just be near Jesus as soon as he can. Peter seems to be craving his own "Jesus and me moment" at the expense of those waiting together in the boat for Jesus. **Question 2. Why do we sometimes want our own miracles at the expense of those who are in the same boat as us?**

When Peter, alone on the water, between the boat and Jesus, panics and flails, Jesus doesn't let him drown. Jesus reaches out his hand and catches Peter, and they both get into the boat with the other disciples. But take note: *It is when they are all in the boat together with Jesus that the winds calm down.* Is the boat filled with disciples in this story an image of the church, the community of faith? We are commanded to go out together onto the sea where the wind is strong, storms arise, and we are tossed around, to do ministry in new places on the other side of the sea. When one of us doubts that Jesus is there, it seems like it would display greater faith to jump out and go to Jesus on our own but, if we do that, is it just a way of displaying little faith, of testing Jesus and questioning him? And what about the other people in the boat?

I have lost count of all the questions now. The more I try to understand Peter's motives, his faith and doubt, his actions, his obvious desire for Jesus and yet his doubt and fear, the more confused I become. He is like us. We have mixed motives and we don't make sense. We ask for things that may not be the best things for us. **Let's go back to Jesus.** As one writer reminded me this week, "the power of this Gospel story doesn't lie in Peter's faith, doubt, courage, or fear. Peter's trajectory – fascinating though it is – is not the point of the reading. Jesus's trajectory is the point because, unlike Peter's, it never changes. It is constant, focused, relentless, and uni-directional. *From the very beginning of the story, Jesus moves towards his disciples.* He moves towards them when they're struggling at sea. He moves towards them when they decide he's a menacing ghost. He moves towards them when they're terrified by his approach. He moves towards them when they're reckless enough to set him a dare. He moves towards them when they begin to drown." He moves towards them when they need help.

When the sea is choppy and we are feeling alone together, or just plain alone, **can we see that Jesus never stops moving toward us?** Can we see that he never stops moving toward us across any condition of life and time and space to reach us where we are? Nothing in us, not our fear, not our faithlessness, not even our own occasional recklessness, deters him from his steady approach. He is always moving toward us. He reaches his hand to pull us out when we are struggling in the water. He is always coming toward us, calling out to us with words to give us peace in the midst of our chaotic and storm-tossed lives: "Take courage. It is I. Don't be afraid." *He climbs into the boat with us.*

And what happens in both stories, where the winds are stilled and Jesus, in the boat with his disciples, crosses finally to the other side? More ministries of healing and love, with people who were not in the boat, but to whom he moves forward, nonetheless. Jesus doesn't ask us to walk on water; that was Peter's idea alone. He does ask us to get in a boat and go someplace with him. We aren't called to recklessness, but we aren't called to do nothing, either. If we stay in the boat, he will find us where we are, and he'll find a purpose for us too. 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 with My Soul -Bliss/Hayes*

### Prayers of Intercession

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

For your whole church throughout the world. Give courage in the midst of storms, so that we see and hear Jesus calling: "Take heart, it is I: do not be afraid." May we follow Christ wherever he leads. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For those in need. Everyone who calls upon your name will be saved. Accompany all who are lonely, hear the voices of those who cry out in anguish, and support those who are frustrated in their search for an affordable place to live. We pray for those suffering this day. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

For our congregation. You have gathered us here today as your people and we thank you for this gift. We pray for those who are new to this community, for students and teachers preparing for a new school year, and for those struggling with unexpected hardship. Supply us generously with your grace for our life together. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Listen to the cries of your people waiting patiently for your healing hand and comforting Spirit especially: those who suffer with chronic pain and all cancer patients, Pr. Mary Etta, peace and comfort for Mary Ellen Van Allen, Gail, Fran and Claudia, the family of Debbie Presite, Joe and family, healing for Rusty, the family of Joseph Chambrone, Edie Marie, Suzee, Michael Gilleece and family, the Nelson family, Your Neighbors clients, Theresa, and residents of the Presbyterian Home, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### Thanksgiving at the Table

O God of justice and love, we give thanks to you that you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, awaken unto the needs of others, and at the end bring all the world to your feast; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. **Amen.**

### The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

**Closing Hymn:** *God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind # 400, Verses 1 & 4* -Mary Senn

**Vs. 1** God of tempest, God of whirlwind, as on Pentecost descend! Drive us out from sheltered comfort; past these walls your people send! Sweep us into costly service, there with Christ to bear the cross, there with Christ to bear the cross!

**Vs. 4** God of passion, God unsleeping, stir in us love's restlessness! Where the people cry in anguish, may we share your heart's distress. Rouse us from content with evil; claim us for your kingdom's work, claim us for your kingdom's work!

**Blessing**

Neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. God, the creator, ✠ Jesus, the Christ, and the Holy Spirit, the comforter, bless you and keep you in eternal love. **Amen.**

**Dismissal**

Go in peace. Christ is with you. **Thanks be to God.**

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The global pandemic disrupted daily routines and faith routines, educational life and professional life and home life. At the warning of health officials, we sheltered ourselves with masks and gloves and social distance.

Joys were interrupted. Injustices were amplified.

Personal connections took on new forms.

And now slowly, carefully, we are reentering the places we avoided at the pandemic's initial rise. We are taking our masked-and-gloved protection into social places and workspaces. We are unsheltering our hearts from their fearful bunkers, where shadows of worry and suspicion loomed.

*-The Stillspeaking Writers' Group*

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Attention people who like to sew!

We are looking to collect homemade masks for when we return to in person services. We have hospital style masks, but we are hoping to build up a little collection of homemade masks, as well, because it is more practical. These masks will be available and gifted to Zion guests who may not have a non-disposable mask.

Please let Sara know if you are interested in putting together some masks for Zion. Thank you!

## A Note from Zion's Historian...

I received a wonderful email the other day from Edeltraud John, the historian of St Oswald's Lutheran Church in Weilimdorf, Germany. In the note, she referred to an upcoming biographical publication about Zion's founder, Andrew Wetzel. Julia Krauss, who spoke at our 175th anniversary celebration, authored the work. Ms. John also talked about how her church will be honoring Pastor Wetzel during the upcoming Christmas season.

"How are you in these days? I hope you are well (and not affected by Corona). Time passes quickly. As a grandmother, I am always engaged with family and about the history of Weilimdorf.

In the afternoon on 13<sup>th</sup> of December 2020 we are planning a special ceremony for Andreas Wetzel in the Oswald-Church (St. Oswald's) to commemorate how, 175 years ago, he raised the first Christmas Tree in Zion's sanctuary in Utica.

We will tell the story of his life and of his work at the Zion's Church. There will be a Christmas Tree already in the church for this celebration. Usually it is only put up shortly before Christmas Eve.

May Julia's book be ready by that time! We are looking forward to it very much. We hope that she will be able to travel to Stuttgart (the city that absorbed Weilimdorf) for the event.

Many regards with love to you and to the members of the Zion's Church from our congregation in Weilimdorf.

Our thoughts are always with you, our brothers and sisters in the United States."



Zion's founder, Pastor Andrew Wetzel, was baptized and confirmed at St. Oswald's Lutheran Church, Weilimdorf, Germany.

## Summer Bible Study on Zoom, with Janet Hoover

Bible Study is held on *Thursdays* from 7:30-8:30 PM.

**August 13** Disciples: The Dusty Dozen, Matthew 4:18-22, Matthew 9:9-13, John 1:35-51

To join on Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83302013288?pwd=cGpwTnYwMjduMk96OE0rQXVNTTREQT09>

Meeting ID: 833 0201 3288. Password: 834215.

To join by phone: Dial 646-558-8656, Meeting ID: 833 0201 3288, Password 834215.

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### Enjoy our 16<sup>th</sup> recipe exchange provided to us by Datsy Glista

#### *Zucchini and Tomato Casserole*

##### **Ingredients:**

3 tbsp. uncooked long-grain rice, 1 lb. zucchini (about 2 large) sliced, 3 large tomatoes, sliced (you can substitute a 28 Oz. can diced tomatoes), 1 thinly sliced medium onion, 2 tbsp. brown sugar, 2 tsp. basil, ½ tsp. black pepper, ½ tsp. salt, 1 tbsp melted butter (optional). *Variation:* Add 1/2 lb. ground beef or ground sausage if you like. Brown the meat and layer with the vegetables. Preheat oven to 350 F.

##### **Directions:**

Coat 1 2-quart baking dish with nonstick cooking spray. Sprinkle uncooked rice in bottom of the dish. Layer half of the zucchini, tomatoes, and onions in the dish. Combine brown sugar, basil, pepper and salt; reserve 1 tablespoon mixture. Sprinkle remaining mixture over vegetables. Repeat layers of vegetables. Sprinkle with reserved 1 tablespoon mixture. Drizzle with butter. Cover tightly with foil. Bake 45 - 60 minutes or until all vegetables are tender. Let stand for 5 minutes before serving. Cooking longer makes vegetables softer.

Luke Marscher is newly added to Zion's Birthday list. Luke is turning **two** on August 31<sup>st</sup>! Happy Birthday, Luke!!

