

## Pentecost 14 Leadership Letter

We are grateful to Rev. Janet Hoover for her generosity, especially over the past several months, with the reflections on the Psalms and other scripture passages introducing this weekly leadership letter, along with the recently-concluded bible study offered on Thursday evenings. Rev. Janet has been a comforting presence for our Zion congregation during this time of both pastoral transition and the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you, Rev. Janet!

### Information and Updates:

-The Task Force for Return to In-person Worship met on Aug. 25th to discuss the status of our plans to return to the sanctuary. This discussion included a review of the feedback returned thus far re: the protocol and expressed willingness to return to church at this time. A total of 31 responses had been received to date. All responses were complimentary of the most current version of the return protocol, with some suggestions included. The willingness to return for in-person worship was equally split, with 13 respondents willing to return at this time, 17 not yet ready to return in-person, and one uncertain.

-Given the amount of work necessary to make in-person worship possible, both in preparing the sanctuary and staffing the service, the Task Force needs to hear from more of our congregants about their plans for returning. We will need at least 25 positive intentions to return to the sanctuary, along with more volunteers to staff the service (e.g.—greeters, ushers, sanitizing staff following the service), before we will schedule our return date. If you have not yet indicated your intentions about returning to the sanctuary for in-person worship, please do so by sending an email ([ssilva@zionluth.com](mailto:ssilva@zionluth.com)) or through the US Postal Service. In your feedback, please include: 1) any additional safety measures you'd like to see included in the protocol, 2) whether you will return to the sanctuary for in-person worship with this protocol in place, and 3) your willingness to volunteer to help with the service. Thank you!

-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 may call in to listen from their phones. 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 on the Zoom platform, same log-in info as last week:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwvSTBER2lNbl0lQzd6WGxDdz09> 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 Facebook, Zion Lutheran Church, New Hartford, NY, or on our YouTube channel, you can do so by visiting our page at: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCWzOtbfcEz7-bIPvxp621A>.

-The Red Cross will be holding a Blood Drive at Zion on Saturday, Sept. 12th, from 10:00 AM-3:00 PM. [Click here](#) to make an appointment. Please remember to wear a mask and practice social distancing.

-Your Neighbors will hold their Chicken BBQ on Saturday, Sept. 19th, from noon until gone. The BBQ will be a drive through, and the funds will support Your Neighbors as they chart a new course for serving the community. \$10 will get you barbecue chicken and two sides—a deal, delicious, and supporting a wonderful organization!

-Several groups have or will, sometime in the future, be returning to use our Zion facilities. This includes the YMCA after-school program, Al-Anon meetings, the Girl Scouts, and, eventually, the Nepali Congregation for their Sunday worship. We want to assure our Zion family that all groups using our facilities will be, at a minimum, following the same health and sanitizing expectations that the Task Force has established for our congregation. The safety and well-being of all, both Zion members and those using our facilities, remain the first priority. -Fellowship opportunity following our Sunday service on Sept. 6th! For those attending the upcoming Sunday service on Zoom, we'll have an opportunity for an extended "joyful chaos" after the service. Join us for a cup of coffee or tea in your favorite mug/cup. Let your Zion friends know why the cup you bring has special meaning for you. It may not be the coffee hour in the Fireside Room, but this will be a nice fellowship opportunity.

At this past Sunday's service, Deacon Patsy Glista and the words from Romans 12: 9-21, read by John Blackburn, reminded us of how we might best conduct ourselves during these tumultuous and conflictual times. In Patsy's words, "Jesus is saying to us, 'don't run from suffering, run toward it.' Really look at the community you live in, where is God's justice lacking? See the poverty, the hungry, those who are marginalized. Go to those places, reach out to those people and bring God's justice to that place." And as reinforcement of this message, we read in Paul's letter to the Romans, "...extend hospitality to strangers. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another; ...so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all." Acknowledging that these are sometimes difficult words to live by, let us do our best to make the world a little bit better for all.

Peace be with you this week,  
Mark Thompson and Kristen Burson, church council co-presidents

Pentecost 14



SERVICE OF THE WORD  
GATHERING

WELCOME

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, ✠ one God, who creates, redeems, and sustains us and all of creation. **Amen.**

Let us confess our sin in the presence of God and of one another.

Faithful God,

**Have mercy on us. We confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. We turn from your loving embrace and go our own ways. We pass judgment on one another before examining ourselves. We place our own needs before those of our neighbors. We keep your gift of salvation to ourselves. Make us humble, cast away our transgressions, and turn us again to life in you through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

God hears the cries of all who call out in need, and through his death and resurrection, Christ has made us his own. Hear the truth that God proclaims: Your sins are forgiven in the name of ✠ Jesus Christ. Led by the Holy Spirit, live in freedom and newness to do God's work in the world. **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:** *Although I Speak with Angel's Tongue* #644, Verses 1 & 2 –Mary Senn

**Vs. 1** Although I speak with angel's tongue, my faith, my knowledge all surpass, but have no love, my gifts are vain as changing gong or blaring brass.

**Vs. 2** For love is patient, love is kind, and never vain with boasting pride; love bears all things, all things endures. All things must end; love will abide.

## Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, enliven and preserve your church with your perpetual mercy. Without your help, we mortals will fail; remove far from us everything that is harmful and lead us toward all that gives life and salvation, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

## THE WORD

**First Reading:** Ezekiel 33:7-11

**Second Reading:** Romans 13:8-14

**Gospel:** Matthew 18:15-10

**Sermon:** *The Story of Us* -Rev. Janet Hoover

These scripture passages from the Lectionary are not all that easy to understand, and they are even more difficult to live out, for they call us to walk a journey of love and forgiveness and kindness—not as recipients (although of course we are), but as those who extend love and forgiveness and kindness. Now that’s easy when our neighbor deserves this sort of grace, but it’s challenging, even scary, when, well, they don’t. Raquel Lettsome puts it this way: We live in hostile, divisive times. To be sure, we are not the first people to live through such conflictual times, but heightened emotions, extreme polarities, intense levels of conviction, and deep personal attachments to issues we now face are the makings of a perfect storm that many feel ill-equipped to navigate. Conflict abounds. So what do we do with it? What do we do about it? Paul calls us, in the midst of chaos and confusion, in the heart of anger and ugly rhetoric and violence, to follow the most important law...the law from which all other laws stem...Love your neighbor as yourself. And then he tells us, as we prepare to engage in this radical, difficult way of life, to set aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. I don’t know about you, but even though, at times, I long for a flak jacket to wear against all the hate that swirls around me, as my wardrobe does not contain any armor. Where do we go for the insights that will equip us for our work? How do we know what voices to listen to in the flood of Twitter and Facebook, 24-hour news? The Lectionary passage from the Psalms for this Sunday has an answer for us.

**Read Psalm 119:33-40** This Psalm (actually 150 verses all together), is a call to let Scripture guide us, an urging to read and think about and reread and absorb and ponder and dwell in the words of the Bible. It’s really amazing when you think about it. This book I hold in my hands contains words written hundreds of years ago—words which still have the power to move us and change us. In speaking about the Bible, it is important to remember what it is not. It is not a science textbook. It is not an unbiased account of world history. It is not a series of biographies of perfect people. The Bible is 66 books—a collection of poetry and law, prophetic challenge, history, hymns, letters, sermons, and parables—that help us to see and understand the covenant between God and God’s people. Tom Long puts it this way: The Bible is a narrative lens through which we view everything around us, a master map of the holy human condition, which situates us and gives us a place to stand—to see. Barbara Brown Taylor calls the Bible the living vein that connects us to our Maker, pumping through us the stories we need to know about who we have been to one another from the beginning of time, and who we are now, and who we shall be when time is no more. Through the pages of Scripture, we catch glimpses of God—sometimes mighty and powerful with a voice like thunder, sometimes whispering gently, brushing against our hearts with healing mercies. Scripture is a story of a God who does not break promises, a God who entered into covenant with humankind and who remains loyal to that bond, no matter what we say or do in response to God’s steadfast love.

Scripture teaches us about God, but it also teaches us about ourselves. We live in a world where outside voices seek to define us—describing us as successes or failures based on our looks, our performances, our income—a world where we can be judged the weakest link and exiled into the shadows. And those voices are joined with the voices from deep within ourselves, reminding us what we will never be, never do, never have. Our inner chorus pulses with words like: clumsy, stupid, lazy, ridiculous. How can we possibly hold back the despair? We can do it because the Bible has a different message for us. Scripture is filled with harmonies of grace which remind us that we are created in the image of God. We are God’s beloved children, whom God loves enough to die for. God took a barren old couple and created from them a people. God led broken down slaves into freedom. The sick are healed, the hungry fed, sinners welcomed home—no one is considered a lost cause. When the culture treats me as if all I am good for is to produce or consume, the Bible invites me to love. When the culture encourages me to pour my energies—my intelligence—my strength into making sure that I end up on top of the heap, the Bible calls me to be a neighbor. When the culture conditions me to become a spectator on life, protecting myself from hurt and suffering, the Bible bids me to do justice and love mercy, and walk humbly with God. Over and over the Bible reminds us who we are and how we are meant to live.

The Bible, above all, is the story of us. It’s not just their story, it’s our story. We can’t sit back and read the story of ancient peoples as if, somehow, they have nothing in common with us, for in its pages we find our lives. We are Abraham and

Sarah. We are those who have been called to live a dangerous faith as we move into an uncertain future. We struggle to believe that anything good can come from our feeble efforts—yet setting forth on the hope that it just might be true. We are also God’s people wandering through the wilderness in an endless search for the Promised Land. We grumble and complain about our lack of direction. We ache for the day when we can quit eating the ration of manna and enjoy some milk and honey. Yet God goes with us, and even though we wonder just where it is we are going, we know that we are never alone. We are sometimes self-satisfied rulers determined to subdue lands and peoples and to protect our turf. We resent the insistent voices of prophets who demand justice, and we grow deaf to the sounds of impending crisis. The words of the prophets are sharp, and biting, and we turn away. We are a people in exile, living far from the familiar joys of home. We grow depressed and wonder if we will ever again sing songs of joy. Yet, even in our despair, we make the amazing discovery that, even in the darkness, God is present, offering hope for a new tomorrow. We witness the light of God bursting forth to shatter the bonds of sin and death. We sit at the feet of the teacher who confronts us with our sin and, at the very same time, fills us with the peace of forgiveness and new beginnings. We hold out our broken places for healing. We deny and betray and run away. We cower in terror as we hear nails being driven through human flesh. We stand trembling before an empty tomb. We shout with joy as new life cascades around us. Through the pages of this book we are caught up in the wonder of life lived with God. The story etched in its pages plays out over and over again in our lives, carving out a pattern of amazing grace and love. God creates life out of darkness and chaos. We want more. God sets limits. We challenge them. God is God. We try to be God, too. God judges. We get the message. God forgives. We forget the message. God keeps choosing us. We keep choosing death. God creates life out of darkness and chaos.

The Bible is a partner in my life whose story blesses me, challenges me, and affects everything I do and think. The Bible is not to be kept on a shelf and dusted from time to time. It is not to become an object of worship. It is to be read, studied, experienced. Familiar passages accumulate meaning as I return to them again and again. I am always finding in Scripture something new and astounding I had never seen before. Something that meets me where I am at a particular moment in time. Study of Scripture is a lifelong adventure, for we never reach the point where we have all the answers. It involves asking questions and looking for answers. Scripture is meant to be wrestled with, pulled apart, sifted through. Reading and study are important, but the Bible is also meant to be experienced. I hold my Bible and I feel it pulsing with the energy of creation, for to read it, to study it, to live it, is to become new. Dead and dried out places blossom. Emptiness is filled with meaning. Complacency is punctured. Tears wiped away. The Bible is not a fossil under glass, but a thousand different things: mirror, pruning hook, spotlight, warm blanket, high diving board, bridge. As we read and study and experience Scripture, our life takes on the shape of love. We see that service is the way to greatness. Weakness is the path to strength. Death opens the gate to life. And we are given the courage to go on when everything seems stacked against us. Again, from Taylor: The Bible tells us the stories we need and want to hear—stories to help us live, stories to help us die, and stories to help us believe we shall live again. Listening to them, we are called into relationship with the One who tells them to us. The living words of God heal our hurts and soften our hearts. They clear our vision and guide our feet. Like a lifeline strung from the beginning of time to the end, they show us a way through all the storms of culture, nature, and history.

This fall will be unlike any we have known in our lifetimes. It holds great challenges for students and teachers and parents. Our nation is torn apart with violence as we head toward an election of great importance. We aren’t sure what is coming. But we are called to live with love. We are called to put on the armor of light and be prepared to meet hate with compassion. To return nasty rhetoric with words of kindness. To move forward boldly with the good news that there is nothing that can pull us away from God. This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

### **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: The Love of God      -Lehman/Buda*

### **Prayers of Intercession**

Drawn together in the compassion of God, we pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Turn nations and leaders from ways that lead to death. Shape new paths toward peace and cooperation, teaching us to recognize one another as neighbors. Guide legislators, civil servants, judges, and police toward laws that protect the well-being of all. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Tend to all in need of your compassion. Hear the cries of those awaiting justice and those yearning for forgiveness. Give community to the lonely and neighbors to the outcast. Shelter all who are vulnerable in body, mind, or spirit. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Sustain us in our work, O God, and give work to those who need it. Shape societies to ensure fair treatment for all who labor. Help us to love our neighbors in and through our work. 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, Gail, Fran and Claudia, for peace and comfort for the family of Patty Ahlstrom, prayers for a healthy birth of a baby who is having complications, the family of Debbie Presite, Edie Marie, Suzee, Michael Gilleece and family, for the students and teachers going back to school this week, the Nelson family, Your Neighbors clients, and Theresa, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer.

All these things and whatever else you see that we need, we entrust to your mercy, through 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 us 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:** *Lord of All Hopefulness #765, Verses 1 & 4* -Mary Senn

**Vs. 1** Lord of all hopefulness, Lord of all joy. Whose trust, ever childlike, no cares could destroy: be there at our waking, and give us, we pray, your bliss in our hearts, Lord, at the break of the day.

**Vs. 4** Lord of all gentleness, Lord of all calm, whose voice is contentment, whose presence is balm: be there at our sleeping, and give us, we pray, your peace in our hearts, Lord, at the end of the day.

### **Blessing**

Mothering God, Father, ✠ Son, and Holy Spirit, bless you and lead you into the way of truth and life. **Amen.**

### **Dismissal**

Go in peace. Remember the poor. **Thanks be to God.**

*Thank you for being with us today. Please stay after the worship service for a Labor Day time of fellowship.*



***A back to School Prayer.*** Lord Jesus, I ask for your help as I begin this new school year. Allow me to experience your presence in the many blessings you put before me. Open my eyes to the new challenges and opportunities that this new school year brings. Open my heart and mind to new friends and teachers. Give me a generous spirit to be enthusiastic with my studies. Help me to be attentive to my teachers and let me experience your presence in my new friends. Jesus, inspire me to do my best this year! Amen. -Author Unknown

*We know this year will be different for students & teachers, and we are praying for safety and happiness for everyone in the new school year. Please help teachers, students, parents, and all those who are concerned to work together to ensure that all children receive the quality education and that everyone stays healthy. With your help, God, we will all get through this. Amen.*



## Enjoy our 19<sup>th</sup> recipe exchange provided to us by Sara Silva

Garden Salsa ~ Servings: About 30 tbsps.

### Ingredients:

3 Tomatoes, 1/4 Onion, 1/4 cilantro bunch, 1 clove of garlic, 1 jalapeno, olive oil, salt & cumin to taste.

### Instructions:

Blend the tomato, garlic, and jalapeno in a blender or food processor. Separately, dice the onions and the cilantro. Add the tomato, garlic, and jalapeno mixture to a frying pan with a small amount of olive oil. Heat over medium high heat until it begins to boil and remove from heat. Put the salsa in a bowl, add the cilantro and onion, and stir well. Add salt and cumin to taste



*Zion might have a book group this fall,* pending Council approval (details to follow) using a book recommended by our synod called "The Book of Longings" by Sue Monk Kidd (author of "The Secret Life of Bees" and many others). On Amazon Smile it is available in several versions, including a paperback large print version and an eBook for under \$20. The book arrives the next day after ordering it. This is a fictional story - a novel - and is said to be challenging and a good conversation starter.

The group will be limited in size, so please call or text (315-794-6233) or email Kim Marscher at [kmarscher@yahoo.com](mailto:kmarscher@yahoo.com) if you plan to attend. The meetings, if approved, will be outside under a pavilion at Kim and Jim Marscher's home in the afternoon, dates TBA. We will wear masks.

**BBQ Chicken**  
**DRIVE THRU**

A fundraiser to benefit Your Neighbors, Inc.  
an affiliate of the Lutheran Home of CNY

Touching Lives Every Day  
Your Neighbors

**Saturday, September 19, 2020**  
Zion Lutheran Church  
corner of French & Burrstone Roads, New Hartford  
Beginning at Noon until sold out

 Tasty BBQ chicken with sides  
**just \$10**  
Call 235.7149 for more info

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♥ THRIVENT ACTION TEAM  
Community Impact Grant

I cannot thank our editing team, Laurel McCurdy & Wendy Stevens, enough for their tireless work editing the weekly mailings. So much goes into this mailing and we are so happy to provide it to you each week. -Sara