

Pentecost 16 Leadership Letter
September 20, 2020

To our Zion Family,

This past week we commemorated the 19th anniversary of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the crash of United Flight 93 in Shanksville, PA. In this remembrance, we honored the bravery and sacrifice of the many police, fire fighters, and emergency workers who lost their lives or suffered injuries in that crisis. This reminds us of the role that so many essential workers—police, fire fighters, physicians, nurses, and other hospital staff, grocery store workers, sanitation workers, postal service workers, and many more—have and are playing now in helping us get through this pandemic crisis impacting our lives. Thank you, essential workers!

Information and Updates for the Week Ahead:

-The Task Force for Return to In-person Worship met on Tuesday, Sept. 15th. We are planning the first in-person worship service at Zion for Sunday, Oct. 25th, barring any unforeseen issues that might arise (e.g.- a second surge of the COVID-19 virus). If you are willing to volunteer to help prepare the sanctuary for this service (e. g. remove cushions and bibles from pews) contact Sara. More details will follow in the upcoming leadership letters.

-The Your Neighbors Chicken Barbecue will take place this Saturday, Sept. 19, from noon-gone. \$10 will get you a complete meal of chicken and two sides. This is a drive through event: come to the Zion parking lot, place your order, and your delicious (and labor-free!) meal will be delivered to your car. This is a wonderful organization that really benefits our community. We welcome your support.

-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 may 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 on Zoom, 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, 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/UCWzOtbCe2z7-bIPvxp62IA>. Thanks, Shawn, for developing this option!

-Our Church Council met on Monday, Sept. 14th. The full agenda included discussion of our plans for returning to in-person worship, the full Ministry Site Profile to be filed with the Synod, Zion finances, several property-related issues, and our relationships with the numerous outside groups that utilize Zion's facilities.

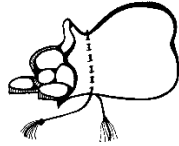
-We ask for your continued prayers for Fran and Claudia King. We are happy to report that Ashley's baby, Monty, is scheduled to be released to go home for the first time this Wednesday. Monty, born a little early, was included in our prayers last week. If you have any prayer requests that you would like specifically mentioned in our weekly leadership letter, please send this information along to Sara. (office@Zionluth.com or leave a message in the church office.)

-Zion served as the site for another Red Cross Blood Drive this past Saturday. The Red Cross has requested that Zion serve as a regular site for future Blood Drives and to do so on a 56-day schedule. (Our facilities and location serve as an excellent site per the Red Cross staff). The next Blood Drive is scheduled for Nov. 21st. We are asking for a volunteer to serve as the liaison for Zion to be working with the Red Cross for future drives.

-WELCA continues to collect donations for back to school kits and can use any notebooks, scissors, rulers, pencils, pens, erasers, and crayons you might contribute. Any extra supplies will be donated to teachers in our community. Let's help WELCA complete those remaining kits and support local children and teachers. Contact Kim Ritchie for additional details. Reverend Jennifer DeWeerth provided us with another thought-provoking sermon this past Sunday. Jen's sermon was titled "Forgiveness." For anyone not able to attend the service, I encourage you to watch the service on Zion's YouTube channel (see link in the third bulleted announcement above) or read the text of Jen's sermon in the Service of the Word section of last week's leadership letter. I was especially grateful to Jen for helping us share and extend the Peace of the Lord with one another at the very start of our service. As always, Jen's sermon was thoughtful, positively challenging, and relevant. So much more that could be said. Read/watch for yourself, it's worth the time you will invest. Stay safe, everyone! Have a good week ahead.

Peace be with you,

Mark Thompson and Kristen Burson, council co-presidents



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: *How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds* #620, Verses 1 & 2 -Mary Senn

Vs. 1 How sweet the name of Jesus sounds in a believer's ear! It soothes our sorrows, heals our wounds, and drives away all fear.

Vs. 2 It makes the wounded spirit whole and calms the heart's unrest; 'tis manna to the hungry soul and to the weary, rest.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty and eternal God, you show perpetual loving kindness to us, your servants. Because we cannot rely on our own abilities, grant us your merciful judgment, and train us to embody the generosity of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

THE WORD

First Reading: Jonah 3:10-4:11

Second Reading: Philemon 1:21-30

Gospel: Matthew 20:1-16

Sermon: -Deacon Patsy Glista

Grace to you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

My brothers and I had a couple phrases we used frequently when things weren't going our way as we grew up. 'It's not fair!' was definitely one of them. My Mom's standard answer was, "Whoever said life had to be fair?" She would then usually go on to explain why it was that one of us was getting something the others weren't. It could have been that my youngest brother got new shoes before school started but my other brother and I didn't. The logical explanation was that we didn't need new shoes because our feet weren't growing as fast. As an adult with children of my own, I remember coming home in the summer of 1978 to learn that my youngest brother, then 16, had not only gotten his driver's license the previous month, but that my parents had also co-signed for him to buy a new car – and he was taking flying lessons! Even at age 26, my comment was, "That's not fair!" Ten years earlier, I had had to pay for my own driving lessons which I hadn't been able to afford until I was 18. My other brother, two years younger than I, had his license at 16, but he had to save his money to buy a used clunker.

One of the other times I can remember protesting 'it's not fair' was when my friends got to go to a party or event, and I was told I couldn't attend. I was quick to say, "It's not fair, everyone else is going." My Dad's response was usually, "Make me a list of at least 10 'everyone else's.'" Children often keep track to make sure they get just as much as everyone else, whether brothers & sisters or classmates in school. As adults, we have also come to expect compensation equal to the task or amount of work done. And yet we live in a world filled with unfairness, inequality, and injustice.

In our Old Testament lesson Jonah is sent by God to Ninevah, an Assyrian city to encourage the people to repent and change their ways. Jonah didn't necessarily think the Ninevites deserved God's forgiveness. He even tried to avoid God's call to him by getting on a ship out of town in the opposite direction to Tarshish. Jonah learned it's pretty hard to hide from God. God comes to him as he's tossed in stormy waters and Jonah lands in the belly of a fish. Jonah got God's message and repented. God forgave him for running and gave him a second chance to obey and go to Ninevah as God had asked. Finally, Jonah went and told the Ninevites, "Repent. Judgment is coming." And much to Jonah's surprise, this people who worshiped other gods and wealth, did repent and change their ways. Even the king put on sackcloth and repented to Yahweh. And God forgave the Ninevites giving them a second chance. He didn't destroy the city or its people. Jonah's response—"It's not fair!" Jonah wasn't ready for God to forgive and forget the sins of Ninevah. Jonah appears to believe that, despite changing their ways, the evil people of Ninevah didn't deserve a second chance.

But we have a God of second chances and forgiveness. We have a God who continues to invite us to know him even if we turn away from him. We have a God whose grace is sufficient no matter how great our sin or misdeed. We have a generous God. Think of the gifts we are generously given by our God – grace freely given; never ending forgiveness, over and over again without measuring the size of our sin; unconditional love; a willingness to sacrifice his only Son to save us; and a share in the harvest.

In our gospel lesson today, Jesus tells the parable of the landowner and the workers he hired. The laborers hired first by the vineyard owner are also clamoring, "That's not fair." They had worked long hours in the vineyards bent over in the hot sun, probably picking grapes or tying up the vines. Others who had only worked half a day or even just an hour were paid the exact same wage that they received. And yet the vineyard owner actually paid them the amount of money that they had agreed to.

Jesus tells us that the kingdom of heaven is like today's story of the landowner. The landowner went early in the morning to the labor market and hired his workers offering to pay them the usual daily wage – one denarius. Generously, he then went back to the labor market time and again and invited laborers to come and work in his fields – agreeing to pay them a fair wage. Don't you wonder a little about his management skills? It seems he would have been more efficient if he hired all the workers he needed the first time. We can look at his approach one of two ways. Maybe the landowner didn't assess the amount of work needing to be done very well and so, indeed, didn't hire enough people on his first visit to the market. OR maybe the landowner actually did hire enough people the first time but had compassion for those who had not been hired, knowing that they would not be able to feed their families without employment, so he went back, not once but four more times. Which of these landowners would we most like our God to be? When it came time to pay the workers, the landowner advises his foreman to first call those hired last to be paid. They are paid one denarius. Can't you just hear the voices of those hired earlier in the day as they speculate that they will receive more money because they have worked since early morning, putting in many more hours? But all the workers receive one denarius. And then the grumbling begins. In verse 15 of our gospel, the landowner addresses the grumbling laborers, "Are you envious because I am generous?"

Have you ever felt resentful because someone else was recognized for a task that you may have done better? What about the person who plays the lottery over and over and never wins? One day a friend buys his or her very first ticket and wins big. Where is the fairness? We all probably know good people who have gotten serious illness, seemingly undeserving. Where is

the justice? The laborers were also looking for justice – justice according to human scales. The landowner used a scale of generosity, God’s generosity.

God doesn’t measure generosity against human scales, for as Paul says in his letter to the Romans, “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. God doesn’t measure how many hours we worked, or how many of our gifts we used, or weigh our goodness against our badness. God just invites us to labor with him; to be his faithful children who share the love of Jesus Christ. It is a labor of faith in believing in Christ Jesus and in suffering for Christ Jesus. The fruit of our labor or the reward for our faithful service is the love of Jesus Christ and everlasting life, whether we have been faithful all our lives or only for a day on our death bed.

We are living in times that are clearly challenging and also have pushed the inequalities in our country into the forefront. Whether it is COVID’s impacting nursing home residents and people in poverty in greater numbers than the rest of the population, the economic shut-down impact that has more severely affected hourly wage earners, or the racial injustices, one would be hard pressed to ignore the disparities. One of the conversations we had in our family earlier this summer was around the government’s stimulus checks. Of course, we appreciated that extra money but surely those who had been furloughed without pay or laid off standing in unemployment lines, needed that help more than folks whose income was not impacted at all. Like the landowner, the government chose to pay all equally even though the need of some was greater. Part of me says that was fair, BUT part of me says it wasn’t fair.

Paul, too, was living in challenging times – he was in prison. And yet he continued to seek ways to share God’s word and generosity. In the Peterson’s Message translation Paul says, ‘my imprisonment here has had the opposite of its intended effect. Instead of being squelched, the Message has actually prospered...They didn’t shut me up; they gave me a pulpit!’ COVID may have shut the doors of our church buildings but it, too, has given us a pulpit – a Zoom pulpit that has opened our doors to many via the internet and phone lines. The ELCA reports that, despite closed buildings, many of our congregations are growing and even accepting new members.

In these times, how do we faithfully serve God when he invites us to labor and to share the gifts given us? Are we able to share generously and without expectation of reward or do we sometimes grumble that the reward is not worth the effort? Do we avoid things when the risks feel too great? As people of God at Zion, we have worked to find creative ways to labor in these difficult times. Generous gifts of time to make phone calls checking in with one another; time committed to create our protocols for returning to in-person worship. Every week when I open the weekly newsletter, I think of the time that our council co-presidents are putting in and give thanks for their leadership. These times have redefined the commitment needed to serve on congregation councils. Others put on their masks and provide transportation to folks who need it. We are also called to labor in our community – to stand up and speak up taking action against the injustices of our day – equal pay, access to medical care, housing, and childcare.

God’s justice is not limited by our human conceptions. He doesn’t look at the job done and measure it against some scale of merit or efforts. God’s generosity is beyond human comprehension. And God grants us never ending mercy and grace and asks us to share them, not just with those we love, but with our enemies, with those who are different from us – the poor, the disenfranchised, and the nonbelievers. We need only put our trust in Jesus and accept him as our Savior. God shares what is His to give – all of creation - with us, his children. We need only open our hearts. The words written by Frederick Faber to a well-known hymn sum it up.

*"There's a wideness in God's mercy, like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in God's justice which is more than liberty.
There is no place where earth's sorrows are more felt than up in heav'n.
There is no place where earth's failings have such kindly judgment giv'n.
Thanks be to God! 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: 'Tis So Sweet to Trust in Jesus ~Kirkpatrick/Buda

Prayers of Intercession

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

Sun and wind, bushes and worms, cattle and great cities—nothing in creation is outside your concern, mighty God. In your mercy, tend to it all. Give us a spirit of generosity toward all you have made. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Where we find envy and create enemies, you provide enough for all. Bring peace to places of conflict and violence. Inspire leaders with creativity and wisdom. Bless the work of negotiators, peacekeepers, and development workers. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Reveal yourself to all in need as you are gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love, ready to relent from punishing. Accompany judges and lawyers, victims of crime, and those serving sentences. Give fruitful labor and a livelihood to those seeking 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, continued prayers for Claudia and Fran with upcoming medical decisions, healing for Norm, prayers for a healthy birth of a baby who is having complications, prayers for Beverly- whose son just died and husband is near death, Edie Marie, Suzee, Michael Gillece and family, the Nelson family, Your Neighbors clients, prayers for Ashley's baby, 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: *Rejoice, for Christ Is King! #430, Verses 1 & 2 ~Mary Senn*

Vs. 1 Rejoice, for Christ is King! Your Lord and king adore; rejoice, give thanks, and sing, and triumph ever more: Lift up your heart, life up your voice; rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

Vs. 2 Our Savior Jesus reigns, the God of truth and love; when he had purged our stains, he took his seat above: Lift up your heart, lift up your voice; rejoice, again I say, rejoice!

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.



There will be a graveside service for Janet Burton on Saturday, October 3rd at Forest Hill Cemetery on Oneida Street in Utica. The family will be meeting at the gate at 11 AM for those of you who wish to go. The family would be pleased to see Janet's Zion family there.

Enjoy our 22nd recipe exchange provided to us by chef Jon Daly

Pumpkin Bread Pudding

PREP 25 mins | BAKE 40 to 50 mins | TOTAL 1 hour 35 mins

Ingredients

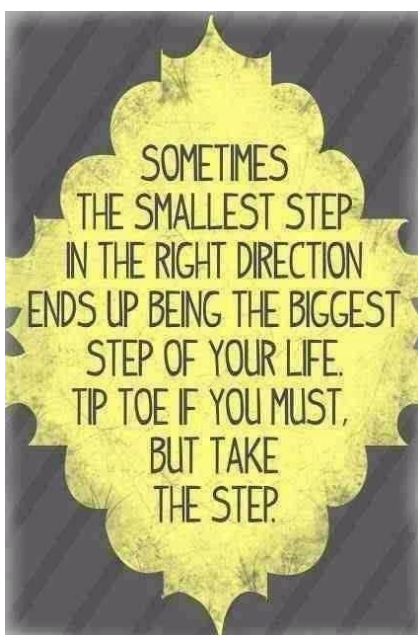
1 can (425g) pumpkin or squash purée, 6 large eggs, 2 cups (454g) light cream or half & half, 1 cup (227g) milk 3/4 cup (149g) granulated sugar, 1/3 cup (71g) brown sugar, packed, 1/4 cup (57g) rum, optional, 1/2 teaspoon salt, 1 teaspoon cinnamon, 1 teaspoon ginger, 1/4 teaspoon cloves, 1/4 teaspoon nutmeg, 2 teaspoons vanilla extract, 8 cups (about 510g) bread, cut in 3/4" cubes (See "tips", below.)

Instructions

1. In a large mixing bowl, combine the eggs, pumpkin, cream or half & half, milk, sugars, rum, salt, spices, and vanilla, stirring to blend.
2. Lightly grease a 2-quart baking dish or a 9" x 13" pan; if you're going to refrigerate the pudding before baking, be sure to use a dish that can go from the fridge to a hot oven.
3. Place the cubed bread in the dish in an even layer and pour the liquid mixture over it. Let it rest at room temperature for 30 minutes, or for up to 24 hours in the refrigerator.
4. Preheat your oven to 350°F. When you're ready to bake the pudding, stir it together to redistribute the custard; quite a bit of it will have been absorbed by the bread.
5. Sprinkle with grated nutmeg, if desired; and bake in a preheated 350°F oven until set and beginning to brown, about 40 to 50 minutes.
6. Serve warm with whipped cream or ice cream.
7. Store, covered, in the refrigerator for up to 5 days.

Tip: Try using any non-savory bread: brioche, a sweet bread, or plain white or whole wheat bread.

Book Group: Monday, Sept. 28th (weather date Sept. 30th) and Monday, Oct. 5th (weather date Oct. 7th) from 2-3:30 PM. Zion members and friends are invited to join an outdoor in-person book group looking at a novel recommended by our synod: "The Book of Longings" by Sue Monk Kidd, author of "The Secret Life of Bees." The group will meet outside under a pavilion at Jim and Kim Marscher's home (8361 Woods Highway, off of Route 5 in New Hartford). **The largest number we can accommodate is 10 people. Please call or text Kim at 315-794-6233 or email at kmarscher@yahoo.com.** If attending, please bring your favorite drink and a pillow for your chair! We look forward to seeing you and reading together.



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

Funded in part by:
THRIVENT ACTION TEAM
Community Impact Grant

take time

take a moment to see the good.
to remember the smiles.
to remember the moments.
to remember the little things.
to be thankful.
to be grateful.
take time to see the wonderful
in this world.
the more you see the good,
the more you will inspire others
to see it as well.
ripple.