

Pentecost 23 Leadership Letter, November 8, 2020

To our Zion Family,

This past Sunday we celebrated All Saints Sunday. We took time to recognize the saints in our midst, perhaps sharing our Zoom screens, and those who have gone before us. For me, All Saints Sunday is always a time of reflection and a reminder of the hope that we have in Christ.

-Announcements and updates:

-**This Sunday we will continue 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=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/UCWzOtfbCe2z7-bIPvxp62IA>.

-The Red Cross will be holding a Blood Drive at Zion on Saturday, Nov. 21<sup>st</sup>, from 9-1. The first two blood drives at Zion were a great success and the Red Cross especially appreciates the large space in our fellowship hall to ensure physical distancing. We are grateful to Cheryl Edmiston for stepping up to serve as a liaison with the Red Cross in order to facilitate continued blood drives at Zion. If you would like to donate, you can make an appointment to give blood at:

<https://www.redcrossblood.org/give>. Let's continue to support the health of our community during these critical times!

-**Zion's holiday traditions include our Angel Tree and Mitten Tree.** The **Angel Tree** benefits the children at Thea Bowman Center, while this year the **Mitten Tree** will benefit the residents of the Johnson Park Center. The need to assist the children at Thea Bowman is greater than ever this year. Due to restrictions made necessary by the COVID-19 pandemic, this year we ask for your financial gifts to the Angel Tree rather than actual toys. If you would like to participate in this year's Angel Tree tradition, please send a check equivalent to the amount you would normally spend for the gifts. Checks can be included with your weekly/monthly contributions and sent directly to Zion Lutheran Church with a notation of "Angel Tree" on the memo line. Angel Tree donations will be accepted during the entire month of November. In December, all the monies received will be converted into gift cards that will then be sent to Thea Bowman staff for the purchase of gifts for the children and their families.

-**The Mitten Tree** is Zion's tradition of collecting handmade or store-bought hats/mittens/gloves/scarves for the upcoming winter months. Donations will be accepted during the month of November and can be dropped off at church in the box in the downstairs coatroom. We ask that you place your items in the 2-gallon Ziploc baggies provided, wiping down the bag and item with the disinfectant wipes (also provided). Items can be dropped off Monday through Thursday. Please let Sara know when you plan to arrive to drop off items. The donated items will be delivered to Johnson Park Center in December. The Social Ministry Committee members gratefully appreciate all of your contributions this year for the Angel Tree and Mitten Tree.

-We ask for your **continued prayers** for Rusty and Bill Pentland, Fran and Claudia King, and Norm and Patsy Glista, along with all those included in Sunday's Prayers of Intercession. We remember especially those in our Zion family who have passed in the last year and their worship and witness to us. Your prayers do make a difference and are appreciated; just ask each of those listed above!

-If you are interested in **servicing as a member of our church council**, we invite your expression of interest. Council members serve a three-year term. We are looking to find four new council members starting in February. If you have never served on council before, this would be a great time to start! Please contact the nominating committee members: Jeanne Gymburch ([jgymburch@aol.com](mailto:jgymburch@aol.com)), Kim Ritchie ([kimritchies@yahoo.com](mailto:kimritchies@yahoo.com)), Michele Lasher ([michlsh@aol.com](mailto:michlsh@aol.com)), or Mark Thompson ([mdthompsonphd@gmail.com](mailto:mdthompsonphd@gmail.com)).

Pr. Janet delivered a moving sermon for All Saints Sunday, calling us to look to saints in our midst, perhaps sharing our Zoom screens, and those who have gone before us. She shared, "You don't have to be famous or perfect, you just have to be you—wading into the water one step at a time. Remember, you don't have to do it alone. You have all this company—all these saints sitting right here where you can see them for yourself, plus those you cannot see. All of them, calling your name and shouting themselves hoarse with encouragement." *May you know that encouragement this week as you wade into the water.*

Peace,

Kristen Burson and Mark Thompson, Church Council co-presidents

Pentecost 23



SERVICE OF THE WORD  
GATHERING

**WELCOME**

**CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS**

Blessed be the Holy Trinity, ☩ one God, in whose image we are made, who claims us and calls us beloved. **Amen.**

Holy One,

**We confess that we are not awake for you. We are not faithful in using your gifts. We forget the least of our siblings. We do not see your beautiful image in one another. We are infected by sin that divides your beloved community. Open our hearts to your coming, open our eyes to see you in our neighbor, open our hands to serve your creation. Amen.**

Beloved, we are God's children, and Jesus, our Beloved, opens the door to us. Through ☩ Jesus you are forgiven, by Jesus you are welcome, in Jesus you are called to rejoice! Let us live in the promises prepared for us from the foundation of 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** *Let Streams of Living Justice #710 Vs. 1 & 2* —Mary Senn

**Vs. 1** Let streams of living justice flow down upon the earth; give freedom's light to captives, let all the poor have worth. The hungry's hands are pleading, the workers claim their rights, the mourners long for laughter, the blinded seek for sight. Make liberty a beacon, strike down the iron pow'r; abolish ancient vengeance: proclaim your people's hour.

**Vs. 2** For healing of the nations, for peace that will not end, for love that makes us lovers, God grant us grace to mend. Weave our varied gifts together; knit our lives as they are spun; on your loom of time enroll us till our thread of life is run. O great weaver of our fabric, bind church and world in one; dye our texture with your radiance, light our colors with your sun.

**Prayer of the Day**

O God of justice and love, you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, and awaken us to the needs of others, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

**THE WORD**

**First Reading:** Amos 5:18-24

**Second Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18

**Gospel:** Matthew 25:1-13

**Sermon:** *Amos, Farmer to Prophet of Yawweh: from Love to Justice* —Eldon DeWeerth

Good morning Zion - members & friends of Zion. I want to welcome you again & thank you for the opportunity to bring you the Word today from Chicago - maybe for the final time on the internet. Yet I have heard recently that it may be six months to a year before this pandemic subsides & we can gather freely again. Yes, you heard it here. And that is why I believe this lesson/text is so appropriate today. May the words from my mouth & the meditations of our minds & spirits be acceptable in your sight O Lord. **Amen.**

## Short History

When Amos was called by Yahweh, he was a farmer & shepherd in Tekoa, a small village 10 miles south of Jerusalem, in the last half of the 8<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E. (700's B.C.E.) After the Israelites had returned from Egypt to the land promised by Yahweh, the 12 tribes, led by the 12 sons of Jacob, were united by the Kings Saul, David, and then Solomon. Then they began to quarrel & fight and finally were divided between the Northern Kingdom, Israel, under King Jeroboam and the Southern Kingdom, Judah, under King Huzzah.

The 10 tribes of the Northern Kingdom were distributed in the lands of other people, & they assimilated into these lands & their people around the two Samaritan cities of Bethel & Samaria, north of Jerusalem. They worshipped a diversity of gods and cultural values.

Two tribes settled the lands south of Jerusalem. Their worship was fully dedicated to the temple of Solomon in Jerusalem. They were dedicated to Yahweh alone. In the next couple of centuries both kingdoms fell. The Northern Kingdom fell in 722 B.C.E. to the Assyrians & were exiled. The Southern kingdom fell to the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E. and were exiled. Even though Amos lived in Judah, of the Southern Kingdom, he was one of the first prophets to invite the Northern Kingdom to join the Southern Kingdom to come together and worship only one God. Worship one God, Yahweh, the God of Isaac & Jacob, the God who brought them out of Egypt, in Solomon's temple in Jerusalem.

Amos calls the people of both kingdoms to come together and seek the Lord. He pleads for them to return to the Lord who made the light of day and the stars of the night sky. Return to this Lord, return to the Lord who saved you from Egypt. The Lord who makes judgment upon you Israel - and you Judah and you the nations. I will not withhold my judgments from you, Bethel & Samaria, for you turn to false gods. God says - I hate, I despise your festivals, nor do I delight in your solemn assemblies; nor do I accept your burnt offerings. Nor do I hear the praise in the song nor the beautiful melodies of your harps. Amos also brings Yahweh's concern for justice. Observing that worship practices, festivals, & sacrifices had little meaning if the leaders & the people did not treat each other with justice & righteousness. Amos notes that God shows anger for how, in prosperous times, they used their wealth for personal comforts, not to help others - the poor especially. God notices also, their unfair business practices - levying heavy taxes on those who could least afford them.

Poverty & landlessness never should have occurred in ancient Israel. They had laws & customs described in Leviticus & Deuteronomy prohibiting the accumulation of land goods in ways that would impoverish a fellow descendant of Abraham & Sarah - regular land redistribution. Amos asks the people to remember that scriptures call on God's people to always Love the Lord their God with all their heart, their mind, and their strength.

Amos seems to make it clear, next, that Yahweh sees the close connection of love with justice. Love is not only in the heart but the implementation of that Love to be shared. The second commandment says, "Love your neighbor as yourself." It is true that we glorify God in what we do with that love for others. For Yahweh, it is evidently a concern for justice. One of my seminary teachers always made it clear - "Justice is Love Distributed." Observing worship & devotional practices are of little matter or help in glorifying God if humans do not treat each other with justice & righteousness. William Sloan Coffin answers the question "Am I my brother's keeper?" with: No, I am my brother's brother or sister. Human unity is not something we are called upon to create, only to organize.

The message of Amos is a challenge to people & nations caught up in the pursuit of wealth, material goods, & comfort. Societies driven by consumerism lose sight of faithful stewardship of all creation, wealth, & distribution of goods. Amos reminded the people & nations that true faithfulness is Trusting in God alone and treating the neighbor with justice.

Last Wednesday, my news channel had a story shared by a 23-year-old Hispanic COVID ward nurse in the South. She told about being the nurse for many COVID patients on ventilators. As she talked about her physical & emotional exhaustion from being with them in the fight to live and comfort them as could no more, and she held/helped them to die. Then she began to tear-up and, trying to keep herself together, she said "And I got the virus from one of the patients. I gave it to the most special person in my life- my grandfather, and I could not save him."

Some two thousand years later Amos would have seen a similar prospective in Dostoyevsky's Brothers Karamazov when he wrote: "Everyone is really responsible to everyone & for everything." We also see this in the words of John Donne, "No man is an island." Whether during COVID-19 or living in the 8<sup>th</sup> Century B.C.E. society, we understand that we are not autonomous individuals, but rather we are one great body of humanity. The most important "Words" Amos records are the final declaration of Yahweh - the God of Israel & Judah & all people - those words were words filling us with love, hope & peace in all things - for Israel, for Judah, for Us.

Amos 5:24

But Let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream.

Amos 9.14-15

I will restore the fortunes of my people Israel, and they shall rebuild the ruined cities & inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards & drink their wine, and they shall make gardens & eat from their fruit. I will plant them upon their land, and they shall never again be plucked up out of the land that I have given them, says the Lord your 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 Jerusalem, My Happy Home -arr. George Shearing*

### Prayers of Intercession

Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the church, the world, and all in need.

Holy God, rouse us to deep praise as we gather for worship. Enliven our worship with sincere and heartfelt song. Sustain the work of all church musicians and artists who lead us in praise and prayer. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Holy Companion, console those who feel lonely or abandoned. Share the hours of those who live and eat alone. Comfort those who have few friends or who struggle with their identity and place in this world. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Holy Protector, be with all observing Veterans Day. Guard the lives of active duty and retired military personnel. Comfort all who mourn those who have died in the line of duty. Heal the wounds, both physical and mental, experienced by service members. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

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, healing for Norm, Rusty, Claudia T., Edween Ham, healing for Jim, healing for Elinor, healing for Caryn, Claudia and Fran, Edie Marie, Suzee, prayers for Michael Gilleece and family, Your Neighbors clients, Theresa, and our country, that the light of Christ may shine upon them with hope. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever. **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, Rejoice, Believers #244 Vs. 1 & 2. -Mary Senn*

**Vs. 1** Rejoice, rejoice, believers, and let your lights appear; the evening is advancing, and darker night is near. The bride-groom is arising and soon is drawing nigh. Up, pray and watch and wrestle; at midnight comes the cry.

**Vs. 2** The watchers on the mountain proclaim the bride-groom near; go forth as he approaches with alleluias clear. The marriage feast is waiting; the gates wide open stand. Arise, O heirs of glory; the bride-groom is at hand.

## Blessing

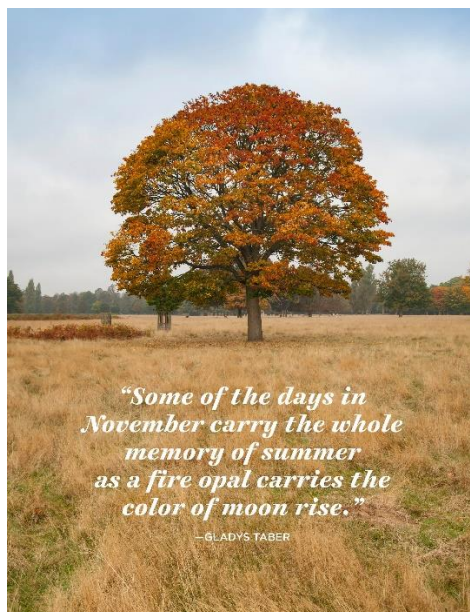
May the God of all creation, in whose image we are made, who claims us and calls us beloved, who strengthens us for service, give you reason to rejoice and be glad! The blessing of God, Sovereign, ✠ Savior, and Spirit, be with you today and always. **Amen**

## Dismissal

Beloved of God, go in peace to love and serve the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**



*“There’s no way to thank our veterans for everything they sacrifice for our freedom, but on Veterans Day, we have to try. Thank you to all our service men and women, both past and present!”*



## Amazon Smile

Don't forget to take advantage of the amazon smile program. They donate a portion to charities, in this case Zion Lutheran Church! Visit <https://smile.amazon.com> to browse millions of items and choose the charity, Zion Lutheran Church, New Hartford, NY.

Please keep this in mind for Christmas shopping, they have almost everything that Amazon has!



### *Thanksgiving Food Baskets*

If you are in need of a holiday meal food basket, or would like to sponsor a family that you know who may need one, please send Sara an email with the info or call the church office at 315-732-4110 (*in case Sara is away from her desk at the time you call, please leave a message*). Baskets are by member request only. The deadline for a request is Thursday, November 19th. If you would like to make a contribution for the food baskets, you may do so by sending your gift to the church in an envelope marked "food baskets" in the memo line on your check. The deadline for contributions is November 10<sup>th</sup>. *Thank you for your continued support!*

### **Faith Formation: *Walking Together Through Advent***

*Wednesdays, December 2, 9, 16, 23 from 7:00-8:15PM*

The word "synod" literally means "walking together." This course is a way for us to join siblings from all the communities of the synod in walking toward Christmas. You may want to intentionally invite a friend or family member who lives far away to join with you in this Advent faith practice as an opportunity to be together while being apart. Each week, we will watch a short film together (3-7 minutes long). The film series we will use is called "Birthing God's Movement of Grace," produced by The Work of the People. Then, we will have small group conversation about what we learn and notice. Finally, we will share in a time of contemplative prayer practice.

#### **SIGN UP HERE:**

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSd5tzTHpv3GreCtUtUJ3ESOGBYSqcoOJ6iBE3bSvNaYoEaLig/viewform>

Once registered, you will be sent the Zoom link for the retreat along with the other necessary information from the leader. There is no cost to participate. Contact Pr. Lori Kochanski [lkochanski@upstatenysynod.org](mailto:lkochanski@upstatenysynod.org) for info.

#### **More about the focus of each session:**

December 2 "A Cup of Longing" with Becca Stevens

December 9 "Step Back and Step In" with Emilie Townes

December 16 "The God that is Coming" with Kelly Brown Douglas

December 23 "Upsetting the Pyramid" with Diana Butler Bass

*We have an abundance of Living Lutheran magazines from March through October, if you'd like to stop by the church to take some, give Sara a call. The magazines are on the dresser in the foyer. Thank you!*