

## Transfiguration of Our Lord – February 14, 2021

To our Zion family,

This past Sunday following the 10:00 AM service, we met via Zoom to hold this year's Annual Meeting. Thank you to all those who attended, along with those who helped present the 2020 Church year. Despite all the challenges encountered in 2020, the Annual Report and our meeting show that Zion remains a healthy congregation that continues to carry out its mission. Many thanks to Sara Silva for putting together the Annual Report and all who contributed!

### **Announcements and updates:**

-At this year's Annual Meeting, our congregation voted in new Church Council members: Laurel McCurdy, Barb Wilson, and Nancy Thompson. Dan Rodahan will also be joining council meetings regularly. Dave Meneses and Doreen Nicholls will both serve an additional three-year term on the Endowment Committee. We extend our thanks to Kristen Burson for her year as council co-president. (Kristen will remain on council for an additional year beyond her three-year commitment.) The Council Leadership Team for the upcoming year will be Mark Thompson (president), Jeanne Gymburch (vice-president), Linda Bennett (secretary), and Wendy Stevens (treasurer). Wendy just completed six years (two terms of three years) on the council and, per our constitution, must rotate off as a council member. She will, however, remain in her role as Treasurer. Thanks to Wendy for years of devoted service! Welcome to Laurel, Barb, Nancy, and Dan, as they join continuing members of this year's church council: Linda Bennett, Carol Blackburn, Kristen Burson, Jeanne Gymburch, Matt LaFave, Michele Lasher, and Kim Ritchie.

-Feb. 28th is our next scheduled in-person worship service, assuming conditions remain safe enough to allow for us to gather in person. In order to hold this service in person, we need five volunteers to staff this service: three greeters at the front door to check people in and two ushers. If you are willing to help staff the service, please call Sara at the office. Should we not have enough volunteers, we will need to hold the service via Zoom. Several members of the Task Force will be out of town that weekend and unable to play a role in the service.

-We will be polling our Zion congregation in the next two weeks to get an idea of the readiness of our members to return to the sanctuary for in-person worship. Holding in-person worship is a labor-intensive undertaking. It would be helpful to know the needed conditions for individuals' readiness to return (e.g.—infection rates below 3% for x number of consecutive weeks, or a sufficient % of our congregation attending who have already received two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, etc.). This polling will be sent to you via the same method by which you currently receive Zion correspondence.

-This Sunday we will continue with our remote worship practice, offering the opportunity to attend the service via Zoom, livestreamed on Facebook, or by using the printed Service of the Word, which you will find later in this mailing. To join this Sunday's service via Zoom, same log-in info as last week:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84354840714?pwd=TDJGTkwvSTBER2lNb1o1Qzd6WGxDdz09>

Meeting ID: 843-5484 0714, Password: 022654. Or by PHONE, +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-bIPvxp62IA>.

-Holy Week services: At present, Zion is planning in-person worship services for Palm Sunday (March 28th) and Easter Sunday (April 4th). We will not be holding services at Zion on the weekdays during Holy Week. Pastor Anita Mohr, our transition pastor, and Our Saviour's congregation have generously invited Zion members to attend their services during Holy Week. We will include Zoom links for the Our Saviour services in our upcoming leadership letters. Ashes will be provided for Ash Wednesday, Feb. 17th. For instructions on distributing ashes, celebrating communion, and accessing Our Saviour's Ash Wednesday Service on Zoom, please see the "Special Announcement from Pastor Anita" that is right after the Benediction/Dismissal on page 6.

How can I get a vaccine appointment? Am I eligible? Council is researching how we might be able to help our congregants who don't have computer access secure these appointments and vaccinations. We'll keep you updated. If you'd like assistance in securing an appointment for a COVID vaccination, please call Sara.

-Zion's Souper-Bowl tradition lives on despite the pandemic! This past Sunday, 509 cans of soup were donated to this year's effort. Thanks to everyone who contributed to the effort, and especially to John Blackburn who coordinated and collected the donations. The soup will be distributed to local food pantries in the area.

-The exterior locks have been rekeyed. Those who had been approved for a new key should contact Sara to make arrangements for passing along new keys.

-Each church council member will serve as a liaison to one of Zion's standing committees. If you have questions or suggestions related to any of these committees, please be in contact with the designated liaison. They are:

**Standing Committee Council Liaisons:**

Christian Education: Matt LaFave

Disabilities Ministry: Dan Rodahan

Endowment/Knobloch: Michele Lasher and Matt LaFave

Finance: Kristen Burson and Mark Thompson

Hospitality: Linda Bennett

Personnel: Nancy Thompson

Property: Carol Blackburn

Stewardship: Barb Wilson, Kristen Burson

Social Ministry: Kim Ritchie

Transportation: Dan Rodahan

Worship and Music: Laurel McCurdy

Youth Group: Carol Blackburn

Other Committees:

Call Committee: Linda Bennett

Task Force: Jeanne Gymburch

In her sermon this past Sunday, Rev. Janet Hoover offered us reminders, sometimes with a touch of humor, that our God is with us always and that our faith is not a passive process. "God calls us from our recliners to the long and winding road." (My time in our recliner will never be the same!) "We are addicted wing flappers, and it can lead us to become totally exhausted." (We can rely on our God to lighten our load, we don't have to always do things on our own.) And, finally, "Life with God is not about the destination, but rather about the journey. We are nomads." In the week ahead, let us enjoy the journey rather than just the outcome, surrender our tendency to be solo flyers, and put our faith into action rather than remaining passive. And, as always, stay safe and healthy.

In appreciation for our wonderful Zion family, Mark Thompson, church council president

**RETURN TO IN-PERSON WORSHIP SERVICE SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT**

We request your input as we consider our eventual return to in-person worship services. Please respond to the following questions to help us get a clearer understanding of where we currently stand as a congregation:

Are you ready to return for in-person worship services at this time?

If you are not ready to return to in-person services, what needs to be in place before you are ready?

(Examples—1) A Percent Tested Positive rate of 3% or less for COVID-19 tests administered for two or more consecutive weeks, 2) more than 50% of those attending services having received both doses of the vaccine? Or 3) something other than the above scenarios?) Please describe what you need to have in place in order to return to the sanctuary for worship in the space below:

In order to hold an in-person worship service on Sunday, February 28th, we need to be sure that this service is staffed with volunteers who are willing to make that happen. Would you be willing to help staff the worship service (as a greeter or usher) on Feb. 28th? (Circle) yes no.

Please be prepared to discuss this during the "joyful chaos" following the worship service this Sunday. If you do not attend the Zoom service, please call or email Sara with your responses. (office@zionluth.com/315-732-4110).

## Transfiguration of Our Lord



### SERVICE OF THE WORD GATHERING

#### WELCOME

#### CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

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

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

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

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

**Opening Hymn:** *Alleluia, Song of Gladness, Vs. 1 & 4* Hymn #318 –Kelli Watson

**Vs. 1** Alleluia, song of gladness, voice of joy that cannot die; alleluia is the anthem ever dear to choirs on high; in the house of God abiding thus they sing eternally.

**Vs. 4** In our hymns we pray with longing: Grant us, blessed Trinity, at the last to keep glad Easter with faithful saints on high; there to you forever singing alleluia joyfully.

#### Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, the resplendent light of your truth shines from the mountaintop into our hearts. Transfigure us by your beloved Son, and illumine the world with your image, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

**First Reading:** 2 Kings 2:1-12

**Second Reading:** 2 Corinthians 4:3-6

**Gospel:** Mark 9:2-9

**Sermon:** *Transfiguration Sunday* -Rev. Jennifer DeWeerth

The Transfiguration story that we hear on this Sunday is not just your garden variety conversation between Jesus and a few of his disciples. No, this is a mountaintop experience with all the first century bells and whistles. There are dazzling displays of light and appearances by Moses and the great prophet, Elijah. Because Elijah appears, the Lectionary designers assign a first lesson from 2nd Kings that we also read in the summer, during the season of Pentecost. It's the story of Elijah being taken up in a whirlwind with a pyrotechnic display of horses and chariots, as witnessed by his successor, Elisha. Yes, it's all about the shiny bright lights this morning to close out the season of light, before the Lenten season, a season of relative shadow that we begin on Ash Wednesday. Big action, mountain top experiences, moments that break through the usual separation between earthly realities and the heavens above.

As I read the texts for this Sunday, there was one line that kept echoing in my head, and it was a strange one. It was the voice of Elisha, as he is watching Elijah ascend in a whirlwind into heaven. Elisha, keeps watching and watching and crying out and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" I researched this line a bit to see what more there was to it, but it is basically an exclamation like it sounds, a combination of being impressed and dismayed, astounded

and also overwhelmed, seeing and yet disbelieving, amazed and also thoroughly undone. “Holy moley, the chariots and the horses! The fire and the whirlwind!” It sounds like it is over the top, all too much to even handle cognitively.

Elisha is following Elijah around from town to town, crossing the river before this moment when Elijah is swept up. We have not been traveling nearly as much as Elijah and Elisha are in this passage (mostly not traveling at all). But we *have* been sitting in our houses for the past eleven months having a similar experience: Our hands half covering our eyes, but unable to look away as our plans and our routines, our expectations and our hopes, go up in a regular fireball of pyrotechnics, a whirlwind of strangeness and smoke. “Holy cow, the virus and the daily news! The unbelievable chaos and COVID!

It is a spectacular phenomenon unfolding before our eyes, but it’s not just a spectacle. Just as is the case with Elisha, this experience is *deeply emotional*. We have experienced stress, grief, and loss, and know that many others have, as well. As Elijah’s final days near, Elisha has asked Elijah for a double share of his prophetic leader spirit. Elijah answers that, if Elisha sees him being taken away, then his request will be granted. Elisha does see it. Boy does he see it. He sees Elijah being brought up to heaven in the whirlwind. So, that’s what he had hoped for, right, to see Elijah’s departure, to inherit a double share of Elijah’s spirit. But still, he is devastated. He is at a loss; his mentor, the great prophet, is gone. He has dreaded losing Elijah, so much so that he won’t leave his side. Then he does lose him. He tears apart his clothing; he mourns. And that’s it. That’s where the reading ends.

Here’s the thing. The lectionary gives us this story today to connect the story of Jesus’ transfiguration to Elijah and the light displays. But in doing so, the lectionary committee snips off the last two verses, perhaps the most important two verses, of the story. Here they are:

“Elisha picked up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, saying, “Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?” When he had struck the water, the water was parted to the one side and to the other, and Elisha went over.”

What do we learn from this story once we take these verses into account? First, this story is not just about Elijah; it is also about *Elisha, who outlives him*. Just like the story of Jesus’ transfiguration is not just about Jesus; it is also about the witnesses, the ones who will come down, and go on and continue even after Jesus is transfigured, and even after he is gone from their midst. And it is about God who is with all of them. ***We need to remember that the mantle is shared.***

Second, at the beginning of the story, Elisha, is *holding on*, desperate not to lose Elijah. But it ends with Elisha *carrying on*. He has been thrown for a loop. (The chariots and the horsemen!!!) But he sees the mantle as it falls to the ground. And he has the call, the courage, and trust in God, to pick it up. *And he continues Elijah’s work of speaking the truth and leading the people*. Likewise, the disciples and Jesus knew that the goal was not to be on the top of the mountain; it was to come back down and do the work of ministry that remains. The work of God doesn’t end at the bank of the Jordan with the death of Elijah, or at the mountaintop, or with the death of Jesus. ***We need to remember that the mantle is passed on and on.***

When I look at Zion Lutheran Church, when I look out at all of you, I see that as the mantle was passed to you last winter, it was in the midst of crisis and chaos, a global pandemic, while you were just trying to grieve a little bit, the loss of your called pastor once again. No harm, no foul, if you had just become overwhelmed, sat down, and torn your metaphorical clothing.

But look at what has happened! Look at how each of you in different ways has picked up the mantle, how Zion together has picked up the mantle of ministry during a time of transition. There has been leadership with purpose and mission. The members of the congregation have been cared for through every struggle and illness, loss and concern. Difficult decisions have been made through inclusive input. Outreach to the community has continued every single month. Plans and progress have been made in the search for a new pastor. The gospel has been preached and safety processes maintained, and songs have even been sung. You saw the mantle of Elijah fall to the ground and you simply bent down, picked it up, and have worn it, together, walking under its weight, and its great meaning. The mantle represents the wisdom, the gifts, and the grace of God...to make a path, a way, through the waters, for the sake of the people of God.

A story of fire and whirlwind. A story of brilliant light. This story is about Elijah and Elisha at the river. It is about Jesus and his disciples on the mountain and all the way back down it again to continue along the way, to minister to the people, to trust and serve God. It is about the church and its work. Sometimes through transition and loss. Sometimes through an amazing mountaintop experience. Always a way forward, even in the most difficult of times. God parts the waters; God transfigures and transforms. We bend down to pick up the mantle of ministry that falls at our feet and wear it across our shoulders for a while. 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* On Eagle's Wings, words and music by Michael Joncas, arr. by Jon Sarta      Kelli Watson

## Prayers of Intercession

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

For the gospel proclaimed in word and deed, for communities of faith far and near, and for all who show the face of Christ throughout the world, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those responsible for safety and protection: for emergency responders and security guards, attorneys and advocates, civil servants and leaders of governments, that they witness to mercy and justice throughout the world, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For all who suffer this day that Christ our healer transforms sickness into health, loneliness into companionship, bereavement into consolation, and suffering into peace, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

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

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

## Thanksgiving at the Table

Holy, mighty, and merciful Lord, heaven and earth are full of your glory. In great love you sent to us Jesus, your Son, who reached out to heal the sick and suffering, who preached good news to the poor, and who, on the cross, opened his arms to all. In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me. Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection, and ascension, we await his coming in glory. Pour out upon us the Spirit of your love, O Lord, and unite the wills of all who share this heavenly food, the body and blood of Jesus Christ our Lord; to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be all glory and honor, now and forever. **Amen.**

## The Lord's Prayer

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

**Closing Hymn** *Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee, vs. 1 & 3* Hymn #836 -Kelli Watson

**Vs. 1** Joyful, joyful we adore thee, God of glory, Lord of love! Hearts unfold like flow'rs before thee, praising thee, their sun above. Melt the clouds of sin and sadness, drive the gloom of doubt away. Giver of immortal gladness, fill us with the light of day.

**Vs. 3** Thou art giving and forgiving, ever blessing, ever blest, wellspring of the joy of living, ocean depth of happy rest! Thou our Father, Christ our brother, all of who live in love are thine; teach us how to love each other, lift us to the joy divine!

### **Blessing**

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

**Amen.**

### **Dismissal**

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

### **Special Announcement from Pastor Anita**

#### ***Ash Wednesday Worship February 17th at 7 PM on Zoom at Our Saviour.***

Ash Wednesday worship will include imposition of ashes and communion. Ashes are being provided at Our Saviour in a plastic bin outside the parking lot doors. Participants may mark themselves or, if you are with a family member, mark one another with ashes made from last Palm Sunday's palms.

You may provide your own wine or grape juice and bread for communion. During worship, you will be encouraged to mirror Pastor Anita's handling of bread and wine during the Eucharistic Prayer. We hope that Ash Wednesday will provide for you a holy entrance into Lent.

Time: February 17th at 7 PM - Topic: Ash Wednesday Worship

Join Zoom Meeting: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88234248557> - Meeting ID: 882 3424 8557

One tap mobile - 1 929 205 6099 US (New York) - Meeting ID: 882 3424 8557

#### ***Lenten Worship begins Wednesday evenings February 24th.***

Our Saviour will use Holden Evening Prayer. A worship folder will be sent to you via email. It will include some of the music and all of the words for Holden Evening Prayer. The theme of Lenten Worship this year is "Prayer." (Please let Sara know if you would like to pick up a copy of this book.) We at Zion would like to thank Pastor Anita and the members of Our Saviour for graciously inviting us to join them in worship during Lent.

#### **WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PALM BRANCHES WE NEVER GOT TO WAVE ON PALM SUNDAY, 2020?**

The Palms, donated by the Loomises in honor of Sara Silva, were aired out, put in vases and displayed between the glass doors of our church during Holy Week. They have been waiting in their vases until now, almost a year later-to be burned this weekend into ashes for us to make the sign of the cross on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday. From Sunday through Wednesday, you will be able to pick up packets of ashes and Lenten devotional booklets in two plastic containers in the flower box to the left of Zion's front doors. Should you need to have them delivered, please call Sara at (315) 732-4110.

***The Warming Center*** clients are in great need of gloves, both men's and women's, new or used.

If you'd like to donate new or used gloves, please drop them off at Zion between Feb. 11<sup>th</sup> & Feb. 16<sup>th</sup>, between the hours of 10AM-2PM (N/A the 12-14<sup>th</sup>). Cheryl Edmiston offered to deliver them. Thank you!



Just a Reminder: In the event of a snow day, (Utica City School District is operating under remote learning only and news of this is hard to find), **the church office is closed.**

Please contact Sara Silva via email ([office@zionluth.com](mailto:office@zionluth.com)) or by cell phone on these days.

Thank you for understanding, and we apologize for any inconvenience this may cause.

*Happy Valentine's Day!!*



AND now these  
THREE remain:  
FAITH HOPE LOVE  
But the greatest OF  
these is LOVE.



1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

