

# Zion News

11609 Frankstown Rd  
Pittsburgh, PA 15235

December, 2022

[www.zionpennhills.org](http://www.zionpennhills.org)

<https://www.facebook.com/zionpennhills/>

*The church in the heart of Penn Hills that is the heart of Penn Hills*



**Pastor's Page:** *"The bridegroom comes! Awake; your lamps with gladness take!*

*Alleluia! Rise and prepare the feast to share;*

*Go, meet the bridegroom who draws near."* - Wake, Awake for Night is Flying ELW #436

Wake, awake! This is the common refrain that we hear over and over throughout the church season of Advent. The cycle of the church year orders our time in Christian community around the central mystery of our faith: the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Our own experience of this, however, is filled with waiting, repentance, lament, and hope.

The season of Advent speaks to this "now-and-not-yet" aspect of the Christian faith, as we gather around word, sacrament and songs, all of which speak of preparation, of waiting, and of the coming King who will rule over all nations and peoples. The readings in Advent prepare us to receive not only a new baby who will come again on the Last Day but also a new world breaking in on the here and now where God's grace, justice, and mercy reign.

The readings for the First Sunday of Advent (Nov 27<sup>th</sup>) begin with the "coming of the Son of Man" at an unexpected hour in Matthew 24. This text disrupts our sense of time by declaring that we don't, in fact, know what time it is – and won't have time to prepare for Christ's coming. In spite of not knowing the day or the hour, we will all be changed.

The readings for the Second Sunday of Advent (Dec 4<sup>th</sup>) begin with readings that are full of reconciliations that are impossible without a drastic change in the world order. But the change at hand is directed and empowered by the "Spirit of the Lord," the same Holy Spirit given in baptism, and of which John the Baptist is a herald when he proclaims, "Repent! Be cleansed! Bear fruit worthy of the Gospel!"

The readings for the Third Sunday of Advent (Dec 11<sup>th</sup>) begin with readings that speak of a deep longing for the coming Jesus Christ, from the prophet Isaiah speaking of God's reign to the people in captivity, to John the Baptist as he sits in a prison cell. Through it all, God is working in the midst of the people.

The readings for the Fourth Sunday of Advent (Dec 18<sup>th</sup>) begin with readings that speak of the prophet Isaiah's prophecy regarding a young woman who will bear a son and name him Emmanuel. We prepare to celebrate the birth of Jesus and continue to look towards the day when Christ shall return again.

We'll gather for our Christmas Eve services on Dec 24<sup>th</sup> at 6pm and 10pm, with special music at 9:30pm. We'll hold our candles, sing carols, receive Christ in bread and wine, and receive the great and precious gift that we have been given in this Word being made flesh and dwelling among us. And then the Christmas celebration continues the next day on Christmas Day with our Lessons and Carols service on Dec 25<sup>th</sup> at 9:30am.

Our Midweek Wednesday afternoon bible study (1pm in the Gerhard Lounge and Zoom) will use poems by E. E. Cummings to aid in our Advent prayer and study together. And our Wednesday evening worship (7pm in the chapel) will be exploring God's Holy Darkness in a service of Word and Prayer.

It's all here for you this month: hope, longing, fear, comfort, repentance, restoration, death, birth, endings, and beginnings. And like our own lives, it doesn't all come at us in a nice and tidy package. But over the course of the next four weeks, the arc of the story is clear: the darkness is giving way to light, the world is being reborn, and the Word is becoming flesh to live and dwell among us. may the Holy Spirit transform your hearts and your minds to receive the newborn Christ King.

*Advent Peace, Pastor Martha*

**Pastoral Care:** If you know of anyone who is in the hospital or would like a visit and communion, please contact Pastor Martha at: 406-565-3592 or the Church office: 412-242-2626.



Thank you to all who helped to prepare for and serve at the Food Pantry last month! We ended up serving over 150 household clients through drive-through and it was thanks to all of your efforts setting up, serving, and cleaning up that it all happened!

Our next pantry meets on Saturday December 10<sup>th</sup> and if you are able to help with set-up on Friday December 9<sup>th</sup> from 9am-12pm in the Community Room or during that pantry on the 10<sup>th</sup> from 8:30am-12:00pm, that would be most appreciated! Thank you

again for all of your time, efforts, prayers and support towards making a difference in our local community and beyond!

### **From: Zion's Adult Forum:**

“In 2015, the African Descent Lutheran Association asked the ELCA 2016 Churchwide Assembly to “draft a formal letter of repentance”, to commit to examine the church’s complicity in slavery, and to acknowledge “the ELCA’s perpetuation of racism.” The delegates of ELCA’s 2019 Churchwide Assembly responded by adopting the “Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent.” That document was the topic of study during Zion’s most recent Adult Forum. This will be the first of a series of articles sharing highlights from the study.

Paragraph one of the Declaration states: “The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) apologizes to people of African descent for its historical complicity in slavery and its enduring legacy of racism in the United States and globally. We lament the white church’s failure to work for the abolition of slavery and the perpetuation of racism in this church. We confess, repent and repudiate the times when this church has been silent in the face of racial justice.”

During our study we discussed slavery, how it impacted our concept of race, and the state of race relations in the United States today. We reflected on what we were taught in history class as well as what was missing or misrepresented in those classes. We questioned why our denomination remains 96 % white; how we may have bought into stereotypes of people of African descent; how we may have been complicit in perpetuating systemic racism. If you are interested in investigating the study resources, Pastor Martha should be able to help you.

We recognize that the lives and history of white people and people of African descent are interwoven. We also recognize that racism is a white problem and requires white understanding and responsibility to effect change. Our silence may be seen as complicity; perhaps we can work to educate ourselves and use our voices to effect some change. An interesting starting point might be an event at the Lutheran University Center found close to home in Oakland on **Sunday, Dec. 4<sup>th</sup> from 4 to 5 PM.** “Truth Be Told” features the art of 7 Black women and 7 white women that reflects racism in their lives. The event is free, but requires registration; please let Rhonda Pope or Pastor Martha know if you would like to attend.



**IRS Deadline:** In accordance with both the ELCA and IRS requirements, all year 2022 contributions should be received in the offering by December 25 (last Sunday of the year). If sent by mail, the submitted check must be dated in the year 2022 and the envelope postmarked no later than December 31, 2022. Any contributions that miss these deadlines will be recorded as year 2023 donations regardless of the date on the check or the offering envelope used. Please plan ahead! December 25 is also Christmas Day!



Midweek Bible Study on Wednesdays at 1pm in the Gerhard Lounge where we will use various poems by E.E. Cummings as we enter more fully into the season.

Midweek Advent Soup Supper on Wednesdays, starting November 30th from 5:00pm-6:30pm. Signups are in the Narthex to bring soup!

Midweek Advent Worship on Wednesdays, starting on November 30<sup>th</sup> at 7pm in the Sanctuary where we will worship with song, prayer, and Scripture as we discover God's holiness even in the darkness of the season

Take-Home Daily Advent Activities (available on the table in the Narthex) for you to complete as an individual or as a family together.

Blue Christmas/Longest Night Service on Wednesday December 21<sup>st</sup> at 7pm in the Sanctuary. Special dinner will be served from 5pm – 6:30pm in the Parish Hall



**Christmas Decorating at Zion:** After worship on December 18<sup>th</sup>, we will decorate for Christmas Eve and the Christmas season here at Zion! Those who are able to help set-up the torches in the pews, creches around the sanctuary and narthex and other preparations are invited to stay and help with the assembly! As the saying goes: many hands make light work!



**Christmas Eve Worship at Zion:** We welcome you and your family, friends, and neighbors to join us for worship on Christmas Eve, Saturday December 24<sup>th</sup>. This year we will be offering two different services to meet the wider needs of people inside and outside of the building:

6:00pm: Join us for a family-friendly worship service with Holy Communion. We will have a “rehearsal-free” Christmas pageant for all (young, old, and in-between) to participate in. Costumes and scripts will be handed out along with the bulletins before the service.

9:30pm: Join us for our annual Christmas Eve special music time with guest musicians and music to prepare your hearts and minds for worship.

10:00pm: Join us for our traditional “candles, carols, and communion” service as we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ in word, sacrament, and song.



**Christmas Day Worship at Zion:** Join us on Sunday December 25<sup>th</sup> for worship at 9:30am for a service of lessons and carols with holy communion. We will even feast on Christmas cookies in the Gathering Space after worship! Join us in the continued celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ!

# Special Offering

**Poinsettias for Christmas Eve and Christmas:** If you wish to order a poinsettia, the cost is \$10.00 for each plant. You can also make a donation for any amount towards either fund. Funds will go to the purchase of a plant or to the Guest Musician Fund. Please place it in an envelope **with a check** made out to **Zion Lutheran Church** with the name of the fund or if it is for a poinsettia on the memo line and place it in the offering plate or mail it to the church. **Deadline to order Poinsettias is December 16th.**



## Stewardship Team and the Zion Giving Tree:

We are all familiar with the popular children's book, "The Giving Tree" by Shel Silverstein. To aid in our Advent journey, the Zion Stewardship Team is challenging the congregation to participate in the Zion Giving Tree during the season of Advent. Please pick up a paper ornament with a corresponding "give back" action item and place on the tree!



## Good Shepherd/Health Ministries:

On behalf of the Health Ministry, I am also making a request for your help. If you know of a member of our Zion family who should be added to the card list, who may need additional help with health resources or who would like home communion, please share that information. You can contact Rhonda Pope, Pastor Martha or Julie Nieser to move that connection forward. Let's work together to stay connected with our Zion family members



## WHO'S WHO OF ZION LEADERSHIP

### Church Council 2022-2023:

Pastor Martha McCreight (President)  
Kathy Gaberson (VP)  
Lauren Fitzroy (Secretary)  
Charlotte Murray (Treasurer)  
Tony Lamorte (Financial Secretary)  
Sue Clydesdale (Stewardship Secretary and Budget and Finance Liaison)  
Kathy Conrad (Parish Nurse)  
Tom Felmley (Communications Chair and Music and Worship Liaison)  
Chris Dippold (Youth Ministry Liaison)  
Joe Balaban (Parish Life Liaison)  
Marc Schuler (Property Chair)  
Mark Mauro  
Ashley Faas (Christian Education Chair)  
Jeannette Christensen (Executive Committee Member at Large)  
Rhonda Pope (Health Ministry co-chair and Liaison)

### Budget and Finance Committee

Pat Pope  
Charlotte Murray  
Gail Snyder  
Mark Mauro  
Tony Lamorte  
Sue Clydesdale

### Christian Education Committee:

Ashley Faas  
Deb Rall  
Chris Dippold (Liaison)

### Health Ministry:

Kathy Conrad  
Rhonda Pope (Liaison)  
Rachel Dolney  
Sandra Short  
Shirley McClure  
Barry & Charlotte Fraser

### Property Committee:

Marc Schuler      Ray Rall  
Joe Balaban  
Tom Felmley  
Pat Pope  
Carl Haftl

Music and Worship Committee:

Andrew Sabol  
Gail Snyder  
Cindy Pierce  
Tom Felmley  
Pat Hauser  
Debbie Marks  
Brenda Wolfe  
Pastor

Stewardship:

Sue Clydesdale  
Charlotte Murray  
Jeannette Christensen  
Pastor Martha

Parish Life:

Tammy Belohlavek  
Joe Balaban (Liaison)  
Debbie Marks  
Barry Fraser

Mutual Ministry Committee (Pastor):

Kathy Gaberson (Council VP)  
Mark Mauro  
Tony LaMorte  
Brenda Wolfe  
Gail Snyder  
Cindy Pierce

Mission Endowment:

Kathy Gaberson  
Charlotte Murray  
Linda Newman  
Pastor



On Sunday December 5<sup>th</sup>, Valisa Thomas-Dutrieuille and her family will be joining us for worship and hospitality time afterwards as a way to introduce them and this new partnership together to the wider congregation. Please plan to join us in welcoming them that day!



**News regarding the recipient of the H. Paul and Helen M. Gerhard Thiel Scholarship, one of the choices of Zion's ULLA:** Jeremy Meyer, a senior at Thiel, is the student selected this year. Much of Jeremy's early years were spent in Pittsburgh's Children's Hospital as he was diagnosed as a very young child with hepatitis. As a teenager he was one of the first patients given an experimental medicine not commonly used for a person his age, and it proved to be very

effective. He is a very healthy accounting major, and interestingly enough, he was this year's fraternity chair of the walk-a-thon from Greenville to Children's Hospital which has been done every year for the past seventy+ years and has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars.

Over the years Bill and I have proudly represented several scholarships at the annual luncheon held at Thiel, the luncheon bringing together the recipient, his family, and persons representing the scholarship. Actually Jeremy was not only the recipient of the Gerhard Scholarship but also the Daugherty Scholarship named for my parents, initiated by St. John's of Highland Lutheran Church in the North Hills. It is always a heartwarming day experienced by a room full of grateful people.

Pat Hauser



We will hold our **annual budget meeting to approve Zion's budget for 2023 on after worship on Sunday January 8<sup>th</sup>**. All voting members of Zion are strongly encouraged to attend. Copies of the budget will be available in the Narthex starting on Sunday December 18<sup>th</sup>. If you are in need of an electronic copy, please email the church office and we will send you one! Thank you!



Racial Justice Working Group at Zion: On behalf of the adult forum/bible study that was completed this Fall using the ELCA's apology to the African Descent Community study guide, a group of participants wish to further that work and invite the rest of the congregation to join in that work. In light of that, we share with you the opening paragraph of the ELCA's Apology to the African Descent Community, as part of our work together as a congregation and as a denomination: "The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) apologizes to people of African descent for its historical complicity in slavery and its enduring legacy of racism in the United States and globally. We lament the white church's failure to work for the abolition of slavery and the perpetuation of racism in this church. We confess, repent and repudiate the times when this church has been silent in the face of racial injustice." A hard copy of this study and explanations are both available in the Library to be checked out. Please join us in this work together - stay tuned for more details!



**Please help us stay connected and grow Zion!** We need you to post, folks!

It is more important than ever that we work together by doing what we do best: talk to each other and our community. All we need you to do is share, like, and comment on what you see on our Facebook pages. Zion has two

ways of communicating over Facebook: a public page and a group.

One, *Zion Lutheran Church* public page faces outward, to the community, and is where we post about events at Zion. It is also where we stream our worship service to members, friends and the world.

Two, Zion has a "group", *Friends and Family of Zion Lutheran Church in Penn Hills*. This is where we share our internal activities and photos. We also pose thought-provoking questions there and ask for volunteers for tasks as well. All members and friends are welcome, and the more you post, the more we can grow by means of social media.

The best part? Those who "like" either our page and/or group do not have to be members of Zion or residents of Penn Hills/Pittsburgh area. They can be from all over the country and around the world!

So, that sibling who lives in Florida? They can be a part of the Zion community by means of our page and/or group. That friend who lives in California? They, too, can be a part of the Zion community! That grandchild studying abroad in another part of the world? Yep! They, too, can be a part of the Zion community.

If you haven't taken the opportunity to "like" either or both of our Facebook pages, we invite you to do so by searching for them using the search option on Facebook. From there, you will have access to content found on both the public page and the group. If you have questions, please reach out to a member of council for more information!

### **Parish Nurse Read of the Month**

#### **Three Wise Women — 40 Devotions Celebrating Advent with Mary, Elizabeth, and Anna**

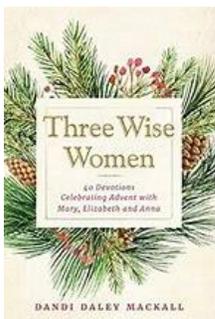
By Dandi Daley MacKall

ISBN 978-1-64060-805-4

Over recent years, we've frequently seen the saying "3 *Wise Women* would have asked for directions, arrived on time, helped to deliver the baby, cleaned the stable, baked a casserole, brought practical *gifts* and there would be Peace on Earth!" on a wide range of towels, ornaments, cups plaques and clothing. These are not the *Three Wise Women*.

Most of us can remember being taught about Christmas and looking at nativity scenes that include the Three Wise Men. Growing up we heard Biblical readings that included Mary (Jesus' mother), Elizabeth (mother of John the Baptist), and Anna (the Prophetess at the temple awaiting the Messiah) but we didn't necessarily put them together in our mind or discuss them together.

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MacKall's recently released devotional relies on the Bible as the trusted source about these women. She has also leaned on her knowledge of Middle Eastern history, language, and culture. Biblical quotes are provided throughout the book along with brief reflections in which she tried to "get into the heads" of these women to imagine what their lives, activities, thoughts, and feelings may have been in that Middle Eastern time and places. The *Pondering* texts help us to consider not only what the experiences of these women were like and provides us with questions to consider regarding our relationship with God.

On **Tuesday, December 6<sup>th</sup> from 7:00-8:00 pm ET**, the Pittsburgh Mercy Parish Nurse Program there will be a Zoom meeting that will include brief readings, prayer, and discussion about *Exploring Advent with the Three Wise Women*. I will be serving as the facilitator. This is a free program however advance **registration is needed no later than noon on December 6<sup>th</sup>**. To register, send an email to [ParishNurse@pittsburghmercy.org](mailto:ParishNurse@pittsburghmercy.org) with your name, email address, and phone number(s). You will receive an email with the Zoom meeting information.

May you all have a meaningful Advent and a Blessed Christmas

Warmly,

*Kathy Conrad, RN-BC*

Zion Parish Nurse

[KConrad@pittsburghmercy.org](mailto:KConrad@pittsburghmercy.org) 412.901.5388



**Newsletter Deadline:** Do you have an idea for an article, update on a project, or a photo from a Zion event or a shout-out or thank you? We would love to have it! All articles are due by the 20<sup>th</sup> of each month. Please send them via e-mail to: [julie@zionpennhills.org](mailto:julie@zionpennhills.org).



### **Financial Status as of October 31, 2022**

Zion's 2022 Current Expense Budget is \$286,431. As of October 31, we spent \$226,822 of it. Our income for October fell short of one month of budget by \$391.43. Our year-to-date (YTD) income shortfall as of October 31 is \$27,043, but all bills have been paid.

The balance in the checking account (the General Operating Fund) is \$48,366 which is about \$900 less than last month. Because our monthly expenses have been averaging between \$22,000 to \$23,000, it is wise to maintain a balance in the checking account that would pay for two months of expenses. We are achieving that.

The Thomas Child Care and Learning Academy (TCC&LA) income began in October, but we used most of this month's income of \$4,150 to repay ourselves \$2,807 for two of the three bills for legal fees for establishing this partnership. One more bill for \$2,006 in legal fees will be repaid in November. (The congregation had approved \$5,000 for legal fees from a special fund that we would replenish using the first couple months of income from TCC&LA.) TCC&LA is supplemental income above and beyond your generous offerings and is needed to keep us on course. Please do your part.



## HAPPY DECEMBER BIRTHDAY

12/2	Robert Scott, Jr.
12/5	Tony Lamorte
12/6	Tonie Cook
12/9	Josh Durick
12/10	Wayne Stumpf
12/14	Shirley McClure
12/14	Lucy Albrecht
12/15	Mary Lou Feathers
12/17	Diane Santoriello
12/18	Sam Seroky
12/18	Martha McCreight
12/18	Olivia Kozak
12/19	Stacey Kalkstein
12/20	Kayla Houghtelin
12/21	Carol Carter
12/22	Elouise Brooky
12/22	Tricia Ford
12/25	Bev Vidmar
12/27	Georgia Kirkpatrick
12/28	Carl Haftl
12/28	Connor Stover

## **HAPPY DECEMBER ANNIVERSARY**

12/07/2003	Mark & Janet Mauro
12/07/1974	Robert, Jr. & Jill Scott
12/12/1980	Ray & Debbie Rall
12/20/1985	Tony & Pat Lamorte
12/22/1962	Paul & Claudia Agnew



### **Update from Pr Christie and Steve Manisto-Saari (Zion's sponsored ELCA Global Missionaries in Cairo):**

Hi everyone! I hope you are doing great! I know that most of you haven't heard from us since this summer which I apologize for. We landed in Cairo and now it's almost December (that's how it feels anyway!) We will be sending our quarterly missionary newsletter very soon. In the meantime, StARS has published a very lovely newsletter sharing news and info—it just came out today and I wanted to send it to each of you straight away. This is also a great chance to say Hi and that you all are in our prayers. We had the BEST summer meeting each of you and your congregations and continue to marvel at the amazing kindness and hospitality that you all have extended to us. Peace to you all in this Advent season. Christie and Steve

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 Service and Justice Home Area  
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