



Zion's News

*Gathered by God's grace, we are empowered to
serve and sent to share Christ's love.*



Pastor Caitlin Kurtz

December 2019

Dear Zion's Members and Friends:

God's grace and peace to you! Last Sunday afternoon, my toddler daughter, Madelyn, and I were headed out for a walk when a car I didn't recognize pulled into our driveway. I assumed it was just someone turning around, but, then, the woman got out of the car and wanted to talk with me. She told me she had met my husband, Seth, months ago while walking the neighborhood, and had recently stopped by our house twice looking for me, but no one was home. She knew I worked at a church, and wanted to know if we had any opportunities for her to meet people, experience some joy, and take a break from the challenges life had recently dealt her. We talked for a while. I learned about her family, what her days were like, and jobs she has held. I invited her to our Wednesday night Community Meal and Rejoicing Spirits worship service, which are ALWAYS filled with joy, and to Sunday morning worship. She lives in our neighborhood and I promised to stop by with some of our brochures, and hope to continue the conversation. As I reflected on our encounter, I was struck by just how hungry our world is for Good News. For joy. For hope. For moments of respite and reprieve from the challenges of life.

Monday morning, I had the opportunity to present about Lutheranism in Jack Beidler's World Religions class, alongside a United Methodist pastor. It was a fun, humbling experience. But throughout our conversation, I found myself stopping myself, and the other pastor, and saying "Wait, do you know what we mean when we say 'Advent'? Do you know what we mean when we say 'incarnation' or 'liturgy' or 'redemption'?" In talking to a roomful of high school juniors and seniors, of all different (and no) faith traditions, I realized how 'churchy' my language can be, and how necessary it is to speak the Good News in words that *matter* to people.

These two experiences have been on my mind this week as we prepare for Advent and Christmas. Many, many hours are dedicated to the worship we offer in the next several weeks—from bulletin preparations to communion set-up, decorating to ushering, sermon writing to anthem-practicing—it can be a stressful and full time in the church. Each worship service is

prepared and planned to reflect the Good News of the Christ Child—to proclaim from the rafters that, in Jesus, Emmanuel, God-is-with-us. To announce that God so loves this world, in all of its brokenness and beauty, that God would leave the heavens and be born in a stable: the fulfillment of prophecy, and the One in whom our sins will be forgiven.

What does this mean to women and men struggling in their daily lives, hungry for hope and community? What does this mean to teenagers, some of whom have never been in a church building and only hear about Christianity on the news? What does this mean to you and me? To our children, and grandchildren? How will they hear and experience the Good News this year?

The need to expand our proclamation of this Good News so more can hear it is why we are offering three worship services this Christmas Eve. We hope the afternoon service will be particularly accessible to those with very young children, those who don't drive after dark, and those who have family affairs on Christmas Eve. As I said in the e-blast asking for worship volunteers, Christmas Eve is a critical opportunity for us to offer hospitality to visitors, some of whom have never heard the Gospel. If you haven't already, I invite you to check out the list of what's needed on our website, on the bulletin board in the Gathering Area on Sundays, or by calling the church office. THANK YOU for helping us share the Good News of Christ's birth in ways that matter.

In hope, Pastor Caitlin

Christmas Eve at Zion's

3 PM Family worship with Christmas carols, interactive sermon, Holy Communion and candle-lighting

7 PM Worship with choirs, children's sermon, sermon, Holy Communion, and candle-lighting

10 PM Brass and Organ Prelude

10:30 PM Worship with choirs, sermon, Holy Communion, and candle-lighting

Christian Education

Chair: Michele McQuaide(michelemcquaide@rocketmail.com;330-958-3399)

ALL CHURCH - A FORETASTE OF THE FEAST TO COME

December 1- 9:15-10:10 AM

December's ALL CHURCH event takes place on December 1. We'll be "looking back and looking forward" through the lenses of communion and Advent.

10:30 AM Worship in Sanctuary



PLEASE NOTE!!

Sunday School will NOT be held on Sunday, December 29, 2019.

Sunday School Program



Zion's Christmas Pageant will be Sunday, December 15 at 7 PM.

Dec. 7, 10am-12:00 rehearsal

Dec. 14, 10 am-12:00 dress rehearsal

Dec. 15, 6:30 pm: report time for the 7 pm performance.

Parents, if your child would like to participate, please let Joel know by December 1.

Note: in order to be in the pageant a child **MUST** be at all rehearsals and the performance.



Special Bell Choir Sunday School Children have been practicing the bells, under the leadership of Stephanie Livingston, during Sunday School since November. There will be no practice on December 8. The Bell Choir will play in worship on December 15. Your child won't want to miss this! (Children as young as three can learn to play the bells--we promise!)

LUNCH BUNCH

The next **Lunch Bunch** will be held on Thursday, December 5 at 12:30 pm at the Swatara Coffee Company. We'll be discussing "The Water" and "Gospel Stories" from Rachel Held Evans "Inspired". All are welcome!

The next **Women's Bible study** will be held at 7:00 pm, on Thursday, December 5 at Pastor Caitlin's home. We'll also be discussing "The Water" and "Gospel" from Rachel Held Evans "Inspired".

January Lunch Bunch and Women's Bible study will be held on Thursday January 16. We'll be looking at "The Sea" and "Fish Stories". Watch your bulletin for Women's Bible Study location.



Youth Group

Leaders: Pastor Caitlin and Joanna Guldin-Noll

pastorckurtz@gmail.com

joanna.guldin@gmail.com



Youth Groupers and Families: Get these Youth Group events on your calendar:

December 16: Caroling in Jonestown (6-8 pm)

We'll share more details through our email list. If you have any questions or aren't getting Youth Group emails and want to, contact Joanna Guldin-Noll at joanna.guldin@gmail.com, 717-228-9846, or at church!

Congregational Care Team (formerly called Social Ministry)

Chair: Sharon Davis (dsdavis11@comcast.net; 865-2781)

The Care Team met on Mon. Nov. 11 to prepare care packages for our seminarian, military, missionary and college students. If you would like to send Christmas wishes, please use the following addresses:

Michael Johnsen (Seminary)
347 Swatara Creek Dr.
P.O. Box 93
Jonestown, PA 17038

SGT Eric Schulden (Military)
B Co 2-104th AVN, 1-10 ARB
Task Force Dragon
APO AE 09355

Cassandra Singh-Hueter (Missionary)
cass.sh27@gmail.com

College students:

Jacob Beidler (Lebanon Valley)
7 Circle Dr.
Fredericksburg, PA 17026

Riley Houser (Lebanon Valley)
11 Pheasant Dr.
Lebanon, PA 17046

Victoria Moyers (Mansfield U.)
64 Morris Dr. #239
Mansfield, PA 16933

Rebecca Boisvert (Bloomsburg U.)
311 Montgomery Apartment
525 E. Second St.
Box 6043
Bloomsburg, PA 17815-1906

Kim Imler (HACC)
701 Maple St.
Lebanon, PA 17046

Donny Redinger (HACC)
1765 Quarry Rd.
Lebanon, PA 17046

Dylan Houser (Lebanon Valley)
11 Pheasant Dr.
Lebanon, PA 17046

Kylee Moyers (Central Penn)
10387 Jonestown, Rd.
Annville, PA 17003

Beth Rose Schindler (Lebanon Valley)
38 Treeline Ave.
Fredericksburg, PA 17026

Caroling to our Homebound



The Congregational Care Team will host caroling to our shut-ins on Sunday, Dec. 8. We will have a light lunch following worship and carpool to our shut-ins about 12:45pm. All are welcome!

Our Homebound members always appreciate your cards and calls.

Below is a list of their addresses:



Grace Dennis
20 S. Lancaster St.
PO Box 316
Jonestown, PA 17038
Ph: 717-865-4660

Ingrid Erb
48 Supervisor Dr.
Jonestown, PA 17038
Ph: 717-865-5850

Elvena Mohn
37 N. King St.
P.O. Box 212
Jonestown, PA 17038
Ph: 717-865-2590

Harold Schaeffer
Juniper Village Rm. 219
1125 Birch Rd..
Lebanon, PA 17042
Ph: 717-272-8782

Angel Tree



An Angel Tree will be found in the Gathering Area on Sun. Nov. 24. The paper angels will have information about clothing, etc. for needy families in the Jonestown area.

Please take an angel or two, shop for the item, wrap the item, and tape the angel on the outside of the package.

Return the gift to church and place on a table marked for the gifts at the back of the Social Hall. Deadline to return your gifts to the church is Sunday, Dec. 15. Your kindness and generosity means so much to these families.

Council Highlights from November 14, 2019 meeting

- Deb Reiner, Matt Wolfe, and Tracy Hoy agreed to another council term. Larry Houser is not eligible for re-election. Named Larry as the Nominating Committee Chair for the coming year. Elections will be held after worship on Sunday December 8.
- Council led a discussion surrounding our expected building expenses within the next 3 to 5 years. Of these expenses, 2020's priorities are the preservation of the rubber roof and replacement of air conditioner(s). It is important that we think about future building expenses.
- Council approved our 2020 operating budget to be presented to, and approved by, the congregation on December 8
- Council approved the use of Memorial Fund money to purchase three racks used to wash glass communion cups, as well as an additional 100 glass cups. This process proves to be more environmentally friendly.
- Following some research, personnel committee recognized that Zion's staff are underpaid when compared to area congregations. Council approved an increase in staff wages, which are reflected in the 2020 budget
- Council approved Alison Daubert and Kathy Price for membership, at a date to be determined

Your Council members are: Larry Houser, President; Terry Ludwig, Vice President; Kelly Rittle, Secretary; Cathy Houser, Treasurer; Brian Adams; Joanna Guldin-Noll; Christine Techky; Tracy Hoy; Noel Strattan; Deb Reiner; Kerri Price; Matt Wolfe; Linda Wenrich, and Pr. Caitlin Kurtz



December 8, 2019—Zion's congregational membership meeting will be convened after worship on December 8, 2019, for the purpose of electing Council members to the 2020 Council and approving the proposed 2020 budget, which will be available in the gathering area and in this newsletter..

Anyone interested in having their name included on the nominee's ballot for Council election should contact Larry Houser, Council President.

Sunday, January 26, 2020 is the date of the **Annual Congregational Dinner meeting**.

**Zion's Logo Mugs**

ON SALE NOW: You know what your office, kitchen, or coffee nook is missing?

A Zion's Lutheran mug! These ceramic mugs feature our church's new logo and are perfect stocking stuffers and gifts for the upcoming Christmas season at the low, low price of \$10. (Of course, you can treat yourself to one, too!) Thanks to generous Thrivent Action Teams, the entirety of your donation will go directly to the youth group to help fund faith activities including attending --for the first time in Zion's history--in 2021, the ELCA Triennial Youth Gathering. Mugs are available for purchase during coffee time every week or see Joanna Guldin-Noll or John Noll.

Proposed Budget for 2020

You will find in this newsletter, the proposed budget for Zion's for 2020. Copies can also be picked up on the small bulletin board in the church gathering area. Please review and if you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Pastor Caitlin., 717-865-3652 (office phone) or via email at: pastorckurtz@gmail.com. or Kerri Price, Finance Chair, at: kerri.price@yahoo.com, 717-507-9139. We will be voting to accept a budget for 2020 at the congregational meeting on December 8, following the 10:30 worship service.

KOINONIA CLASS

Next meeting: Sat., Jan 11, Noon @ Ivana's

President: Karen Hitz (rnkhitz@gmail.com, 717-272-9520)

Meeting: The next meeting will be held on Saturday, Jan. 11, 2020 @ Noon, at Ivana's Bistro.

Activity: Zion's Annual Hollyberry Bazaar - They say it takes a village. And so it was with the Hollyberry Bazaar, a very successful day with many hands throughout the week, volunteers to set-up, clean up, prepare food, package cookies and candy, wrap the gift baskets, advertise, etc. and the list goes on. Zion's once again provided us with the help that was needed. Koinonia thanks all who supported the 2019 Hollyberry Bazaar with the purchase and/or donations of food and goods. Thank-you also to Darryl Hess for donating 2 large stirring spoons for the kitchen, which were badly needed. Thank you to Thrivent for 3 Action Teams for a total of \$750.



This year's bazaar raised \$3,306.81. Koinonia donated \$2,500 of the money raised at the bazaar to the church for the social hall loan. The remainder of the money will enable Koinonia to continue to purchase the church kitchen paper products, Mother's Day and Father's Day, etc.

Looking ahead to next year's bazaar, it is not too early to think about creating a basket, making a craft, or setting aside used items for Book and This and That tables. Due to limited space at church, it would be best if you would store donations until October, 2020. If you have questions contact Janet Bird, jbird75@comcast.net

Upcoming Christmas Activity: Our annual Christmas Dinner will be held at Heisey's Diner on Sat. Dec. 14 at 5:30pm. This will be a family style meal at a cost of \$14.10, payable the night of the banquet. You will find a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in the Gathering Area. Deadline to sign up is Sun. Dec. 8. All are welcome for this fun night of good food and fellowship. Any questions, contact Sharon Davis (717-865-2781).



Officers for 2020

President – Karen Hitz
Secretary – Pat Keefer

Vice President – Blanche Sebastian
Treasurer – Janet Bird

Winter update for the 2020 Father's Day weekend shore trip

THE ROMAN HOLIDAY HOTEL IS NOW CLOSED FOR THE WINTER. If you call them at (609) 522-3111 you will receive a message directing you to e-mail them at stay@romanholidayresort.com. When e-mailing them, please be sure to mention that you are part of the Zion's Lutheran, Jonestown, PA group. During this winter closure time, you will have to verify with the hotel the best way to make your deposit payment.

The Roman Holiday is offering us an opportunity to put down a \$100 deposit NOW to hold a room for 2020. Currently there are many 1-bedroom efficiency suite rooms. Hopefully this will make it possible for all of us from Zion's to again be able to stay at the same hotel.

The \$100 deposit is refundable but only before March 1, 2020. On March 1, 2020 a 35% deposit will be requested. Contact the hotel at that time to determine what that amount will be.

Roman Holiday Motel
1000 (10th) JFK Boulevard
North Wildwood, NJ 08260

Hotel Details: \$147: 1- Bedroom Efficiency Suite (sleeps 6/limit 6) This rate is a \$17 increase from the 2019 rate. Sales & occupancy taxes are 13.625%. There are no extra charges for additional persons –within the occupancy limit. Any families staying Thursday or Sunday Nights receive a \$25.00 discount for each night (does not include Friday or Saturday night). The discounts will be given upon check in or when paying the balance. The Thursday or Sunday discount was \$15.00 this year. Contact person is Janet Bird jbird75@comcast.net.

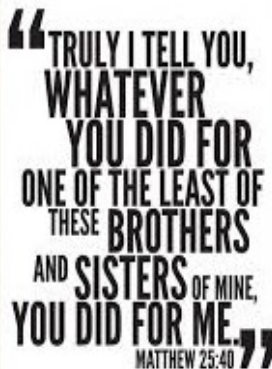
Mission Ministry, (formerly Evangelism)

Chair: Elaine Ludwig (eludadvo@comcast.net; 865-3757)

Lebanon County Christian Ministries

(LCCM) Wish List:

TOILET PAPER, LAUNDRY DETERGENT, TISSUES, MEN'S DEODORANT, SHAMPOO, BODY WASH, HAND SOAP CANNED PASTA, CANNED HAMS, RICE, BABY FORMULA . WINTER BOOTS - MEN'S, WOMEN'S, BOY'S AND GIRL'S - ALL SIZES, COATS - MEN'S, WOMEN'S, BOY'S AND GIRL'S - ALL SIZES, AND BLANKETS - TWIN, FULL, QUEEN, & KING
Place contributions in the container marked "LCCM" in social hall. (Watch expirations)



Jonestown Outreach pantrY (JOY)

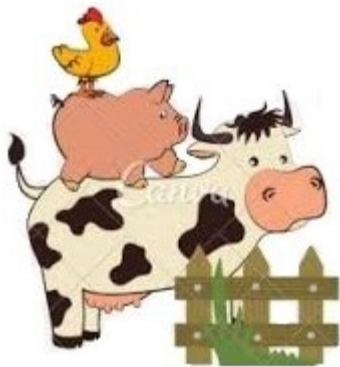
Wish List:

Soup, Cereal Bars, Canned Peaches & Pineapples, Canned Meats, Canned Vegetables, Noodles, Beef Stew, Spam, Soup, Lima Beans, Laundry Detergent, Canned Fruit, Cakes Mixes and Icing.
Place contributions in the container marked "JOY" in social hall. (Watch expirations)

Fill the Barn by Christmas! Starting with the first Sunday in Advent (December 1), we are going to try to "Fill the Barn" with animals for families around the world. Through the ELCA Good Gifts program, we know that the gift of animals such as cows, pigs, chicks, goats, and roosters, can provide a lasting source of food and income for hungry people, and make a real difference in our world.



We can purchase a cow for \$500, pigs for \$30/each, a dozen chicks for \$10, goats for \$50/each, and seeds and training tools for \$50. To top it off, we can add a rooster for \$15! We hope to raise about \$700 to "Fill the Barn" by Christmas Eve.



You can help! By using the specially marked pew envelopes to contribute, with cash or a check made out to "Zion's". Each week during the Children's Sermon, we'll announce how much we've collected thus far, sing a verse from the "Friendly Beasts", and parade up animals representing how much has been collected. We'll celebrate the good work God is doing through us at the 3 PM worship service on Christmas Eve.

If you'd like to give a gift in honor of someone, there will be cards available in the Gathering Area for you to pick up and share with them. THANK YOU for your help in "Filling the Barn", and feeding and supporting God's hungry children.

THE POWER OF VOLUNTEERING - BE PART OF MISSION

Volunteering is a win for the receiver and a win for the doer. Lebanon Lutheran Mission Team invites you to be part of this Win Win Experience.

LOCAL TRIP - June 16 to 19, 2020 or a W. VIRGINIA TRIP - June 21 to 27, 2020. More information is available on the large bulletin board in the gathering area. Everyone is invited, no experience necessary. All skill levels welcome. On-the-job training. A willing heart to serve is all we ask. We need your help. There is plenty of work. Contact Heather Buffington 717-926-3917 or Denise McDaniels 717 628-1461. COMMITMENT FORMS WILL BE AVAILABLE JANUARY 10, 2020.

Hospital Admissions

Please inform the church office when you or a loved one becomes a patient in the hospital or other health care facility, or if there are changes in your health status. The federal HIPPA regulations do not permit health care providers to release personal information such as this without your expressed permission. Not all health care facilities have chaplains on staff to contact us about your admission. A phone call to the church office at 717-865-2848, will help us to respond to you with pastoral care for a time of change in your life.

Worship

Chair: Noel Strattan (dns@telecommute.net; 865-7747)

Wednesday's At Zions

Dinner at 5:30pm, Worship at 6:15pm, and Kings

Kids/Bible Study/Youth Choir at 6:50 pm, Adult

Choir Rehearsal 7:30 pm. **NOTE:** No Wednesday night activities on Dec. 25 or Jan. 1! Happy Holidays!

Zion's Evangelical Lutheran Church

Rejoicing Spirits



Advent Devotional "Stars" from United Lutheran Seminary are available for pick up in the Gathering Area. These include a scripture reading for each day, and a prayer.

Quiet Christmas Worship Service



The Jonestown Council of Churches invites you to a Quiet Christmas Worship Service for those who find it hard to rejoice this year. With words, carols, and candle-lighting, we will give thanks for God's gifts of hope, grace, and love, while acknowledging the loss, grief, and heartache we are experiencing. All are welcome.

Thursday, December 19 at 7 PM Held at Jonestown United Methodist Church.

Financial Update

Zion's is grateful for your financial support throughout the year, which enables us to do ministry in our congregation and community. We believe lives are being changed for the sake of the Gospel in and through our congregation, and we literally can't do this work without your financial support.

Giving to the general and property funds year to date (through the end of October), totals just over \$136,000, which is slightly about last year's giving. THANK YOU for all who have made financial contributions thus far. At this point in time, however, we find ourselves running about a \$20,000 income-vs-expense deficit, due to necessary property repairs including: the replacement of old fire alarm sensors, a sanctuary A/C repair, and water damage due to heating pipe leak. October was a particularly challenging financial month because it included three pay periods (typically, there are two) and 50% of our property insurance. As we close in on the end of our financial year, we are asking for your help. We are grateful for any additional financial gifts you can make, and especially invite contributions from those who have not yet made a gift of record in 2019. Again, thank you for your support, and your partnership in doing God's work.

	Jan to Oct Income	Jan to Oct Expense	Jan to Aug Budget
General Fund	\$131,241.55	\$152,902.43	\$175,563
Property Fund (used to pay for things like heating oil, electric, lawn care...anything related to our building and grounds. This is not actually a separate fund of money, but a line item that some people choose to give to).	\$5,262.50	\$5,262.50	<i>Budgeted property expenses Jan -October are \$30,292, which is included above.</i>

Communion Bread Update: We have returned to standard (gluten containing) bread for the congregation, with gluten free wafers available for those who need that accommodation. When intinction is used, the whole congregation will receive gluten free wafers.



December 2019



SUNDAY	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
1 9:15 ALL CHURCH EVENT 10:30 Worship	2	3	4 5:30 Family meal 6:15 REJOICING SPIRITS 6:50 Bible Study/Kings Kids/Youth Choir 7:30 Adult Choir	5 12:30 PM Lunch Bunch 7 PM Women's Bible Study	6	7 10 am Pageant Rehearsal
8 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship followed by the Congregational mtg. & Christmas Caroling	9	10	11 5:30 Family meal 6:15 REJOICING SPIRITS 6:50 Bible Study/Kings Kids/Youth Choir 7:30 Adult Choir	12 7:00 pm Council	13	14 10 am Pageant Rehearsal
15 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship 7:00 pm Sunday School Christmas Pageant	16 6:00 pm Youth Caroling in Jonestown	17	18 5:30 Family meal 6:15 REJOICING SPIRITS 6:50 Bible Study/Kings Kids/Youth Choir 7:30 Adult Choir	19 7:00 pm QUIET CHRISTMAS SERVICE	20	21
22 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	23	24 Christmas Eve Services (see below)	25 	26	27	28
29 NO Sunday School 10:30 Worship	30	31			Bulletin deadline is every Tuesday	

*Sunday School Christmas Pageant
Sunday, December 15 at 7:00 PM.*

Rehearsals: Dec. 7, 10 am-12:00
Dec. 14, 10 am-12:00
Dec. 15, 6:30 pm - report time for the
7 pm performance



*Christmas Eve Services:
3:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. Family Services
with Holy Communion
10:30 p.m. Traditional Candlelight Service
with Holy Communion*

Worship Participants for December 2019

	Lectors	Crucifer	Acolytes	Communion Assistants	Counters	Children's Sermon	Prayers of the People
1	Monica Bortz	Gavin Bush	Zoe Menzel MacKenzie Hess	Ed & Elaine Ludwig	Larry & Sharon Houser	Pastor Caitlin	Nancy Ludwig
8	MacKenzie Hess	Brian Adams	Levi Bucks Gracie Bucks	Madison Hess MacKenzie Hess	Kerri Price	Pastor Caitlin	Grace Ludwig
15	Denyse Mohn	Daryl Hess	Logan Livingston Dante McFarland	Madison Hess MacKenzie Hess	Deb Reiner	Pastor Caitlin	Deb Reiner
22	Karen Hitz	Joanna Guldin-Noll	Daryl Root Lillyana Harris	Dean Hess Ken Hess	Kelly Rittle Deb Long	Pastor Caitlin	Noel Strattan
29	Elaine Ludwig	Zoe Menzel	Lillyana Harris Cassie Bortz	Dean Hess Ken Hess		Tracy Hoy	Cindy Taylor

Altar Guild	Ushers	Dec. 1 Getting to know you
1,8 Bucks Family 15,22 Jen Boisvert, Noel Strattan	29, Bortz Family Tom Keefer, Daryl Hess, Georgetta Wolfe, John Mohn Jr.	Stewardship/Finance and Endowment

Newsletter #2

Cassandra Singh-Hueter

November 20, 2019

Welcome to my newsletter about my journey in Argentina! To follow my adventures, you can also visit yagmyearcassandra.wordpress.com. Thanks!

DEVOTION

Matthew 18: 1-5

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who, then, is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

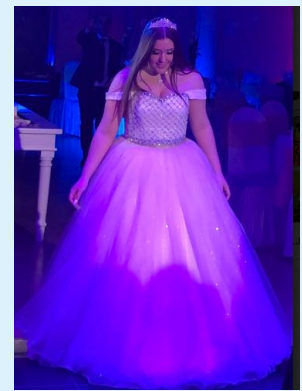
²He called a little child to him, and placed the child among them. ³And he said: "Truly I tell you, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. ⁴Therefore, whoever takes the lowly position of this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. ⁵And whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.



One of my cohort members used this passage in his devotion during our retreat last week, and I really appreciated what he had to say about it. We had a group discussion about how we are like children because everything is new to us, we are still learning a lot, and sometimes we don't understand what's going on. This was a profound reminder to me: being humble sometimes means realizing that I can't be too proud to ask for help with simple things. Being humble isn't always a choice we can make on our own.

May we all learn to be a bit more like children.

Vaya con Dios
(Go with God)



I got invited to a Quinceañera! It was so much fun!

(Pic below) My host brother loves dancing.



The Spanish word *taller* (not the word meaning opposite of shorter) is actually pronounced more like TIE-SHARE, with less of the "R" sound, and means "workshop". This *Taller de la Memoria* is led by a gerontologist named Graciela who created a social space for elderly people in a way that challenges them mentally. It is open to women and men, but I think only women normally attend. She leads weekly sessions; one on Thursdays and one on Fridays. I go to the sessions on Thursdays.

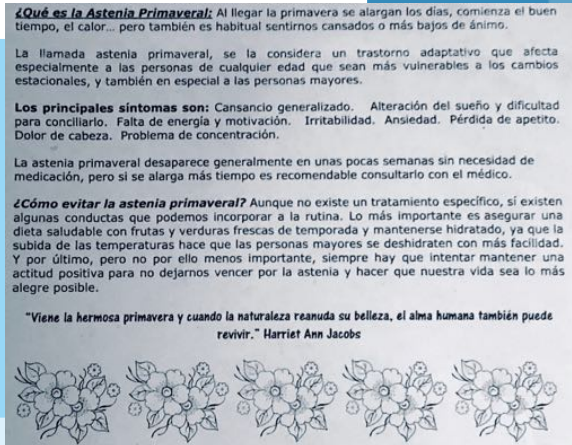
The workshops start off with some sort of word-related game. They've had word unscrambles, *sopa de letra* ("letter soup" which means word search), and other letter association games. Usually the day has some sort of theme, such as "Teacher Day", "Mother's Day", or "First Day of Spring". Then, Graciela has a "presentation" on the theme. Sometimes it's quotes about that theme with pictures and music in the background, like with the first day of Spring. Sometimes she gives background information, such as where Teacher's Day came from. After that, we all help put together a *Merienda*, meaning mid-afternoon snack time with coffee, tea, and

pastries. Then we spend about 20 minutes chatting and eating snacks.

This unique and interesting space is one of the only social spaces some of the women have each week. One lady told me that she takes two different buses just to attend these workshops. It's also really sweet watching these women interact and enjoy friendships. When birthdays are celebrated, the women take pride in the difficulties they've overcome throughout the year. During the workshops, some women are almost constantly talking - trying to share either advice or stories - and other women are very focused on the workshop. I have loved watching them think back to their childhood and recall memories. I'm eager to see what else I learn from them.

Blessings,
Cassandra

Picture of part of the worksheet Graciela passed out for the 1st day of spring



SHOUTOUTS

This isn't a complete list, so I want to thank everyone for all the support and kindness you've shown me.

Shoutout to...

- Friends and families who have guided me along my journey
- Mentors and people in my various faith communities who have supported me
- Anyone who has supported YAGM through donations
- Anyone who has reached out to chat with me these last few months
- My traveling community - those who are also serving in Argentina and Uruguay; we have an amazing and enthusiastic group
- My host family for taking care of me these last few months
- My host communities for involving me in their activities and helping me get to know everyone
- **You, the reader, for accompanying me on this journey!**

Featured Section: La Kermesse

In each newsletter, this section will be for talking about something that I did that wasn't part of my daily routine, or something that stuck out to me.

On October 19th, one of my host churches, *El Redentor*, had a festival called *La Kermesse*, (which is a French word meaning "fair" or "festival"). This event was held in October this year because, in Argentina, October is a month to celebrate families. *Fun fact: *Mother's Day is celebrated in October in Argentina.** One of the main purposes for hosting this event is that it gives families a chance to reconnect, it helps families meet other families, and it allows everyone to spend a bit more time being a kid and playing games.

The other main purpose for *La Kermesse* was that it stands in solidarity with an organization called *Vamos a la Fiesta de la Vida* (which, roughly translated, means "Let's go to the party of life"). This organization helps families with unstable incomes in particular neighborhoods. When describing *La Kermesse*, the website uses keywords such as "solidarity", "accompaniment", "walking with" and "helping". That language really aligns with the language used in this program, which I really appreciate. The youth of that organization were first to arrive on Saturday and we had an *asado* (kind of like barbeque, but better) of hamburgers for them, and then they were able to begin playing the different games we had set up.

The *Grupo de Familias Jóvenes* ("Young Families Group") did a majority of the planning for this event, such as deciding on food prices, making sure the activities were ready, and buying all the supplies needed.



Picture of the activities for the little kids

They also spent hours the night before and that morning blowing up balloons, setting up activities, and putting out the tables and chairs. I was able to help make all of the vouchers for the prizes, fix up the activities, and then set up the night before. So much effort and planning went into this activity that it surprised me how quickly the event itself, which was 4 hours, actually went.

I really appreciated that this event involved so much of the community. We had over 70 prizes this year, almost all donated by shops and organizations. I don't know what the actual attendance was, but it seemed like a really great turnout. I also appreciated the sense of community I felt with the members of the *Grupo de Familias Jóvenes*. I remember that working with this group that weekend was the first time I knew a majority of the names and faces of the group and I felt like I actually knew this group of people.

This was a really cool event to witness and I'm glad I was able to be a part of it.



Picture of La Kermesse in action

PRAYER REQUESTS

- For all the other YAGMs, that each country's retreat provided time to recharge so that the YAGMs could return to their communities with a renewed sense of purpose
- For sending communities in the US as they prepare for the holidays and the end of the year
- For hosting communities as they continue to find ways to integrate the YAGMs into their communities
- For YAGM alumni as they continue to reintegrate into life in the US
- For Argentina, which just elected a new President, and Uruguay, which is getting ready for Presidential elections
- For the political climate of the surrounding countries
- **Other prayer requests not mentioned here**

If in the future, you have anyone you would like to be added to the Prayer Requests List, please send your prayer request, and I will add it to the next newsletter I send.



1st Communion celebration of one of the congregation members

Thank you so much for reading my newsletter!

If you would like to support YAGM monetarily, you can visit

bit.ly/YAGM-Cassandra

BONUS PHOTOS!



Photos from Caseros, one of my host churches:

Left – a garden that the preschool takes care of; on the box, it says “I will grow with love”

Middle – the 6th graders went on a week-long trip, and this was their enthusiastic welcome back

Right – the first communion participants helped make this beautiful mural on a tapestry