



Mar. 2020

# Zion's News

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



Pastor Caitlin Kurtz

Dear Members and Friends of Zion's:

*Throughout 2020, Zion's Council Members will be sharing a bit about themselves, their faith, and how they see God at work at Zion's. Joanna Guldin-Noll, our Council President and the director of Youth Choir, is the author of this month's feature article.*

## **What brought you to Zion's, and how long have you been attending?**

About 32 years ago, my parents walked through the front doors of Zion's with my sister Rachel and me in tow, and we've been attending since! The welcoming community here at Zion's played a large part in why John--my husband-- and I came back and settled down in Jonestown after his service in the Navy.

## **What keeps you here?**

I believe that we are a congregation of people who are constantly striving to live God's word and be Jesus' hands and feet in our community. I want to be part of that mission!

## **Share a favorite memory of a worship service or event here.**

There are so many! While it's not tied to one particular year, I love our 10:30 PM Christmas Eve Service. Singing "Silent Night" in candlelight (especially when the congregation sings four-part harmony a capella) fills me with joy and chokes me up every single time. I also love singing "Joy to the World" as the recessional and playing "The Hallelujah Chorus" on trumpet with my sisters, Dad, and John at the very end of the evening.

## **Share your favorite hymn/Bible verse/Bible story.**

"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go." - Joshua 1:9

## **What do you think are the biggest problems facing people today? (in our community/nation/world) How can the church address these problems?**

Inequality, tribalism, and a lack of empathy are huge problems facing our community, nation, and world.

Time and time again, Jesus speaks about taking care of the widows, the imprisoned, the sick, the poor, and the outcast. Jesus always sides with the other and always flips society's expectations. How could we change our community and world if we challenged ourselves to see, treat, and love people the way Jesus sees, treats, and loves people? What if we challenged ourselves to really question and really change the systems and structures that hurt people, just as Jesus did? We cannot be people who go to church and profess to believe in one thing but go into our community, voting booths, and civic organizations where our actions show we believe something entirely different.



*(Continued on reverse)*

**What's the one ministry at Zion's you always share with others? (Or a time you were especially proud of how Zion's lived in response to God's call)**

I am completely biased when it comes to the youth choir. It is absolutely wonderful to see so many children and young adults who want to be part of the musical legacy and heritage of our church and who are invested and excited to be worship leaders and partners in ministry here at Zion's. Without exception (and I truly mean that!), every choir member is a hard worker who strives to do their very best-- which means not only singing the lyrics but understanding them too; not only singing the notes but working on phrasing, tone, and dynamics; and not only showing up for Sunday morning but coming

faithfully to practice every Wednesday night. They constantly want to be better and ask me questions about theology ("Why does our song say 'they nailed him to a tree' when the Bible says Jesus was nailed to a cross?"), our service ("Why do we take communion then?"), and other random stuff ("Why does the adult choir have binders but we don't?"). They suggest different ways to do the anthems (usually so that they are longer), and they delight in surprising the congregation whether that's singing with sunglasses on, adding an a capella verse, or learning the song in a different language. When I look at our youth choir, I see our church's next generation of musicians, pastors, lay leaders, and congregants. And I am really excited for what is to come.

**What do you think God is calling our congregation towards?**

I think God is calling us to continue reaching out into our community and breaking down barriers in order to be more welcoming and affirming to all of God's people. The explosion of Rejoicing Spirits and our coordinating ministries on Wednesday nights, our preschool, and All Church Sundays are testaments to that. We need to meet people where they are, secure in the knowledge that while some things in our church may change, God doesn't.

*Thank you, Joanna, for sharing with us.*

**Worship**

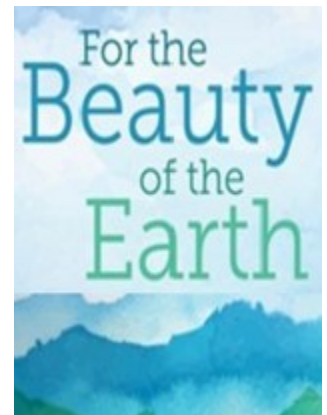
Chair: Noel Strattan (dns@telecommute.net; 865-7747)



**For the Beauty of the Earth  
Lent Mid-Week Prayer Services**

Wednesdays @ 7:00 pm, beginning March 4 - Jesus continually chooses images from nature to teach about the Kingdom of God. What can we learn from nature? How do we encounter God in nature? How are we called to care for creation?

Each week will feature readings from scripture, music, original artwork, and guest speakers from Zion's, sharing their encounters with God in the great outdoors.



**Looking ahead to Holy Week:**

April 5 - Palm Sunday we will meet in the Jonestown Square at 10:30 AM for a Palm Processional, ending with worship in the Sanctuary. (Alternatively, you are invited to meet in the sanctuary at 10:30 AM, for a stationary palm processional)

April 9 - Maundy Thursday we will have Dinner Church at 6:00 pm in the social hall.

April 10 - Good Friday we will worship in the sanctuary at 7:00 pm.

## Christian Education

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

### ALL CHURCH - THE LORDS PRAYER

All church Sundays are when all ages meet in the social hall at 9:15 for a fun and interactive Sunday School experience, which concludes with Getting to Know you Time, (aka cookie day),

**March 1- 9:15-10:10 AM**



## LUNCH BUNCH

The next Lunch Bunch will be held on Thursday, March 26 at 12:30 pm at the Swatara Coffee Company. We'll be discussing "The Letter" and "Church Stories" from Rachel Held Evans "Inspired". All are welcome!

The next Women's Bible study will be held at 7:00 pm, on Thursday, March 26. We'll also be discussing "The Letter" and "Church Stories" from Rachel Held Evans "Inspired". Watch bulletins for a location!



"Wise" guys: Men's Bible study will be held on March 14 at 8:00 a.m. in Zion's social hall. All men of the congregation are invited to join us for a morning of fellowship and learning, as well as some sweet goodies!



It's time to start thinking about summer camp at Camps Kirchenwald and Nawakwa. There's something for all ages, and Zion's offers scholarships that help make camp possible for everyone! Scholarship forms must be completed and returned to the Church Office by June 1, 2020, together with a copy of your camp registration form. Incomplete or late applications may not be considered. Zion's will provide a scholarship for one camping experience per child per summer. Scholarship forms can be picked up alongside the Camp Brochures in the Gathering Area or on our website.



If you have any questions or concerns, please see Pastor Caitlin. Scholarship Forms, and a link to the Camp Brochure, are also available at [www.ZionsJonestown.com](http://www.ZionsJonestown.com)

## Congregational Care Team (formerly called Social Ministry)

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

Congregational Care team will meet on Monday, March 9 at 2:00 pm in the classroom by the mailboxes at church.

Care packages will be prepared for the college students and military at our March meeting.



Easter Lilies will be delivered to our homebound members during Holy week, April 5.

Highlights from Council and Congregational Meetings. *Please note, entire minutes can be picked up in the Gathering Area.*

#### January 20 Council Meeting

- Council received copies of the book *Not Your Parent's Offering Plate* which will be the focus of our devotional/learning times this year. This book addresses what financial stewardship looks like in 2020, and how it needs to look different than how it looked in our parents' and grandparents' generations
- Council received with gratitude the 2019 year-end financial reports, and December's financial report. While we ended the year with a \$10,000+ deficit, we are grateful for the extra gifts we received in December, and for all the contributions made throughout the year. We look forward to the year to come, with hope in your generosity and trust in God's faithfulness.
- Council approved Pastor's 2020 housing designation at \$25,000 (within the compensation parameters approved in the 2020 budget), and designated that \$500 of the roughly \$800 we save each month by Pastor being on Tricare health insurance instead of the ELCA Portico Health Insurance will go towards the *Renew, Restore, Remain* Capital Campaign for 2020.
- Set Council priorities of: visibility within the congregation, telling the story(ies) of how God is at work in our congregation, and stewardship awareness and growth
- Agreed that Council members will write 'getting to know me' articles for the newsletter throughout 2020, to increase our visibility within the congregation and practice naming where we see God at work in the congregation
- Voted to waive the social hall fee for the "Taste of Jonestown", which will be hosted by the Jonestown Historical Society on April 26
- Finalized plans for the congregational dinner on January 26.

#### January 26 Congregational Meeting

- Enjoyed a delicious potluck meal. Thank you Rob and Michele McQuaide for coordinating the meal.
- Heard stories from several members of our congregation, Rejoicing Spirits community and preschool about how God is at work in and through Zion's.
- Unanimously approved the \$80,000 *Renew, Restore, Remain* Capital Campaign to purchase three new A/C units for the sanctuary, replace the A/C and heating unit in the Pastor's Office, repaint and repair the sanctuary walls/ceiling, re-coat the Social Hall roof, and pay off the remainder of the existing loan on the Social Hall.

#### February 17 Council Meeting

- Council discussed the introduction and first chapter of *Not Your Parent's Offering Plate*, including the importance of saying "thank you" for all the ways people contribute to ministry at Zion's, including financial gifts of every size. We also discussed the fact that, today, the church needs to compete for funds in ways it didn't have to do in previous years.
- Approved the purchase of four additional crosses for adult choir members from the Memorial Fund (each cross is \$21, plus shipping)

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

## 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 make great gifts 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.



Mission Ministry, (formerly Evangelism)

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

### LENT 2020: Pass for the Planet

The overall theme for Lent 2020 at Zion's is "Caring for Creation". Our Wednesday night prayer services will focus on the hymn "For the Beauty of the Earth", with lessons from Jesus, who often uses nature imagery to explain the Kingdom of God, and our congregation members, who daily experience God in the great outdoors.

Sunday morning worship will focus on "Changed by God for the Sake of the World", with stories of how Jesus encounters people in scripture and forever changes their lives. Together we'll consider how God's encounter with each of us calls for *change* in our lives—how we treat one another, how we treat ourselves, and how we treat this beautiful world God has created.

**Mission Ministry is also building on this discussion by asking Zion's members to reflect on our relationship with the earth, and particularly, how *single use plastics* have become an everyday reality that harms the earth in a variety of ways.** These plastics are not biodegradable or, often, recyclable. We use them for a short while, and then they live in our earth for **thousands** of years. We encourage you to make a difference by 'sacrificing' the use of some of these items for Lent, and, hopefully, for longer!

**Week 1 beginning March 1– REDUCE and REUSE plastic shopping bags.** As often as you can, bring your own cloth bags when you go shopping (and remember to take them out of the car!) When that's not an option, be sure to reuse the plastic shopping bags—trying using them as waste bin liners, poop-scoopers, or bring them to church where we will re-use them when we pack Power Packs at Jonestown Elementary.

**Week 2 beginning March 8 – Say "no thank you" to plastic straws.** Single-use plastic, like straws, soda and coffee cup lids, and plastic silverware are used for a few moments, and then live thousands of years in landfills, oceans and waterways. Plastic does not biodegrade, but rather disintegrates into smaller pieces of plastic called microplastics that are consumed by animals and cause great harm. Try to saying "no thanks" to these items.

**Week 3 beginning March 15 – Buy fresh, loose fruit and vegetables, not pre-packaged.** Bring your own (maybe re-used) plastic bags to shop, and then store them in reusable containers. While this may be a challenge in March, consider trying it again in the summer months when local produce is readily available.

**Week 4 beginning March 22 – Use a refillable water bottle instead of a plastic one.** Like straws, plastic water bottles are used for a short while, and then live forever in creation. "Fast" from the convenience of 'grab and go' by investing in a reusable water bottle, and taking time to refill, wash, and reuse it. Overtime, this will save you money, too!

**Week 5 beginning March 29 – Do not use Styrofoam cups or plates.** Like other plastics, Styrofoam does not biodegrade, which means it has a LOOONNNGGG lifespan on our earth, even though it's use (as a take home container, or a picnic plate) often lasts a few days at most. The chemical processes used to manufacture Styrofoam also release dangerous gases into the air, which contributes to Styrofoam's harm. Instead, use real plates, or paper ones which are slightly better for the environment. When going out to eat, take your own Tupperware containers for leftovers.

*\*Finally, though not related to PLASTIC per say, we encourage you to participate in "Meatless Monday" by planning and eating meals that contain no meat. This isn't simply an effort to "save the animals": the production, transport, storage, cooking and wastage of food are **substantial** contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, which are destroying our ozone layer. Reducing meat consumption, even a little bit, is one way we can all care for creation (and save money! And, arguably, enjoy some health benefits!)\**

*See some options from our own Becca Hoffer on the next page.*

## “Out-to-eat” Vegetarian Favorites

- “Impossible WHOPPER” @ Burger King
  - Tastes like a real burger! “Impossible burgers” are also available at Red Robin
    - <https://company.bk.com/menu-item/impossible-whopper>
    - <https://www.redrobin.com/burgers/impossible-burger.html>
- “Mediterranean Veggie” @ Panera Bread
  - The tomato basil bread that it comes on is the best thing ever
    - <https://www.panerabread.com/en-us/menu/products/mediterranean-veggie.html>
- My favorite pizza: White pizza with tomato and broccoli @ Pizza Town 2
- My favorite “out to eat” food of all time: Sesame tofu with white rice @ May’s Wok

## Vegetarian Classics

- Grilled cheese with tomato soup
  - Add toppings like fresh tomatoes, sun-dried tomatoes, spinach, and pesto
  - Experiment with different breads (such as sourdough or pumpernickel) and cheeses (such as goat cheese or unsmoked gouda)
  - Great tomato soup alternatives include butternut squash bisques and lentil soups
- Macaroni and Cheese
  - My favorite combinations include: white cheddar and peas; spinach and artichoke; and classic velveta with breadcrumbs
  - Most grocery stores also carry gluten-free and dairy-free versions
- Veggies and Hummus
  - There are lots of different variations of hummus available at most grocery stores
  - Any my favorite veggies to eat with hummus are cucumbers, carrots, celery, cauliflower, and bell peppers
  - Pretzels also are great to add
- Chickpea Salad
  - Tastes very similarly to chicken salad
  - Combine mashed chickpeas and vegetables of choice (celery, onions, bell peppers)
  - Add mayonnaise, relish, and lemon juice; with salt and pepper to taste
  - Can be eaten on a sandwich or on a salad
    - <https://www.acouplecooks.com/easy-chickpea-salad-sandwich/>

## Great Online Resources

- <https://www.meatfreemondays.com/>
- <https://cookieandkate.com/>
- <https://naturallyella.com/>



Women’s Lenten Breakfast, March 28, hosted by Jonestown United Methodist Church.

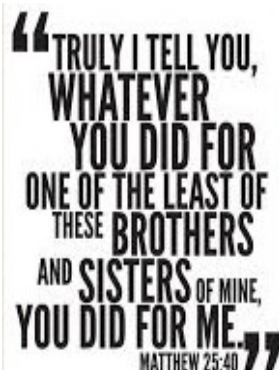
Men’s Lenten Breakfast, Saturday, April 4, hosted by St. John’s UCC. (tentative)

Watch your bulletins for more details!

### 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, beef broth, chicken broth, baby formula, diapers-SIZE 4, 5 AND 6, Baby food-all stages.*  
Place contributions in the container marked “LCCM” in social hall. **(Watch expirations)**



### Jonestown Outreach pantrY (JOY)

#### Wish List:

Canned Potatoes, Canned Lima Beans, Canned Meats, Mixed Vegetables, Beef Stew, Spam, Soup

*Place contributions in the container marked “JOY” in social hall. **(Watch expirations)***

Meeting: The next meeting will be held on Saturday, March 7, 2020 @ Noon, at Martino's Italian Traditions restaurant, on Rt. 72, just north of Heisey's diner.

Activity: is being planned for Spring - Watch bulletins!

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](mailto:jbird75@comcast.net)



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

Zion's shore trip is the 3rd weekend in June/Father's Day weekend. The August newsletter first posted info to reserve "NOW" since last year the rooms were so limited. As of now, the Roman Holiday Resort is full. Daniel, the hotel manager, has agreed to create a waiting list for our group. As the owners of rooms decide to relinquish their rooms for rent that weekend, the hotel will contact those on that list. If you would like to be added to that list, contact the hotel at (609) 522-3111 or [stay@romanholidayresort.com](mailto:stay@romanholidayresort.com). Mention that you are with the Zion's Lutheran group. Questions-contact Janet Bird, [jbird75@comcast.net](mailto:jbird75@comcast.net).



Throughout March the hotel will be responding to phone calls and from 10am - 6pm Monday through Saturday. Anyone wanting to book at another hotel in that area, the Roman Holiday office manager recommended the Matador 609-522-1234, Le Boot 609-522-0500, and American Inn 609-729-7700. A few other motels that are a little further but highly recommended are the Paradise 609-729-5000 and Crusader 609-522-6991. The rates will be different than those at the Roman Holiday.

#### Pre-School Registration for 2020 – 2021 school year has begun!

If you, or anyone you know, are interested in registering for the 2020-2021 school year, please contact Missy Ditzler at [zionspreschool@verizon.net](mailto:zionspreschool@verizon.net) or 717-861-4416.

#### Young Adults in Global Mission

Our sponsored missionary, Cassandra Singh-Hueter's latest newsletter is included in the online version of this newsletter. You can also see it on the large bulletin board in the gathering area at church. It's a great way to see what she's up to and how her life is being enriched by serving.



#### Unwanted Christmas Gifts or Cards? –

Bring them to church. The Basket Raffle-Auction committee is currently accepting those Christmas gifts and/or gift cards that you received and you really don't want or can't use. Please place them in the receptacle located in the gathering area. or you can give it to Deb Reiner or Steph Livingston.

#### 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.

**Youth Group** Leaders: Pastor Caitlin and Joanna Guldin-Noll  
 pastorckurtz@gmail.com joanna.guldin@gmail.com



March 8: Small Group Bible Study, Dinner, & Movie, 5 PM  
**Zion's Youth Starring in "The Wizard of Oz"** A number of our youth and children are participating in Northern Lebanon's Spring Musical: The Wizard of Oz. We invite you to support them by attending a show! Participants are: Maddie Hess, Kenzie Hess, Joe Beidler, Becca Hoffer, and Gracie Bucks. Show times are Monday March 9 at 1 PM, Thursday March 12 at 7 PM, Friday March 13 at 7 PM, Saturday March 14 at 7 PM and Sunday March 15 at 1 PM. For tickets, please contact the school office 717-865-0541.



**Bring-A-Book, Take-A-Book**

If you're looking for a Christian book to read during the long winter nights, check out the bottom two shelves in the gathering area. A number of new books have been added recently.



**Anyone Hersheypark Happy?**

Discount Hersheypark tickets orders will be taken through **March 15**. Payment is not needed until the tickets are received. The group discount prices are less than offered by Giant or AAA. Plan ahead and save money. Fill out the order form and give to Janet Bird, place in her church mailbox, mail to her at P.O. Box 75, Jonestown, PA 17038, or e-mail the order to jbird75@comcast.net so that it is received by **Sunday, March 15**. The tickets are good for any one day of the May through September 2020 park season. If you have questions, contact Janet Bird at 865-5636.

**\$36.95 All Tickets**    **\*\*This price is because we are placing the order in March\*\***  
 Saving (\$15 for ages 3 to 8 and ages 62+)    Saving (\$38 for ages 9 to 61)  
 Order forms are available on the large bulletin board in the gathering area.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Total Tickets \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

email \_\_\_\_\_

phone \_\_\_\_\_


By presenting your pre-purchased ticket you can visit HERSHEY PARK for 2 ½ hours prior to closing FREE on any evening prior to your visit.  
 (3 ½ hours FREE when HERSHEY PARK closes at 11 PM.)





# March 2020



SUNDAY	MON	TUE	WED	THUR	FRI	SAT
1 9:15 <b>ALL CHURCH EVENT</b> 10:30 Worship	2 7:00 pm Worship/Music mtg.	3	4 5:30 Family meal 6:15 REJOICING SPIRITS 6:50 Youth Choir 7:00 Lenten Service 7:30 Adult Choir	5	6	7 8:00 am Men's Bible study Noon-Koinonia
8 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship <i>Spring Forward</i> 	9 2:00 pm Cong. Care team	10 6:30 pm Christian Ed mtg.	11 5:30 Family meal 6:15 REJOICING SPIRITS 6:50 Youth Choir 7:00 Lenten Service 7:30 Adult Choir	12	13	14
15 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	16 7:00 pm Council mtg. NEWSLETTER DEADLINE	17	18 5:30 Family meal 6:15 REJOICING SPIRITS 6:50 Youth Choir 7:00 Lenten Service 7:30 Adult Choir	19	20	21 <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;">Bulletin deadline is every Tuesday</div>
22 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	23	24	25 5:30 Family meal 6:15 REJOICING SPIRITS 6:50 Kings Kids/Yth Choir 7:00 Lenten Service 7:30 Adult Choir	26 12:30 Lunch Bunch 7:00 Women's Bible study	27	28
29 9:15 Sunday School 10:30 Worship	30	31				

## Worship Participants for March 2020

	Lectors	Crucifer	Children's Sermon	Acolytes	Elevette Op.	Prayers of the people	Communion Assistants
1	Karen Hitz	MacKenzie Hess	Pastor Caitlin	Max Clark Logan Livingston	Tom Frey	Gracie Bucks	Pam Bixler Noel Strattan
8	Grace Ludwig	Gavin Bush	Monica Bortz	Levi Bucks Gracie Bucks	Tom Keefer	Michelle Bucks	Pam Bixler Noel Strattan
15	Linda Wenrich	Brian Adams	Christine Techky	Madison Hess MacKenzie Hess	Brian Adams	Sharon Davis	John Noll Joanna Guldin-Noll
22	John Noll	Daryl Hess	Sharon Houser	Lillyana Harris Daryl Root	Logan Livingston	Anita Frey	John Noll Joanna Guldin-Noll
29	Joanna Guldin-Noll	Joanna Guldin-Noll	Laurie Gill	Zoe Menzel Xander McQuaide	Mike Sease	Tom Frey	Ed & Elaine Ludwig

Counters	Altar Guild	Ushers	March 1 Getting to know you time
Wk 1 - Larry & Sharon Houser Wk 2 - Kerri Price, Wk 3 - Deb Reiner Wk 4 - Kelly Rittle, Deb Long	1,8 Jen Boisvert & Noel Strattan 15,22 Bortz family 29 Bucks family	Jack Beidler, Darryl Bush, John Mohn Jr.	Youth Group

Zion's will be decorating with Lilies for Easter this year. If you would like to sponsor any of these plants, please fill out the form below and place it and \$7.00 per plant in the offering plate any Sunday between now and Mar. 15. Plants may be claimed by sponsors after worship on Easter, April 12.

**\*\*return this form with your payment to the church, or place in the offering plate\*\***

(#) \_\_\_\_\_ Lily(ies) were placed by \_\_\_\_\_

in honor or memory of \_\_\_\_\_.



# Newsletter #3

Cassandra Singh-Hueter

January 2019

Welcome to my newsletter! To follow my adventures, you can also visit [yagmyearcassandra.wordpress.com](http://yagmyearcassandra.wordpress.com) (will be updating soon). Thanks!

## DEVOTION

### Romans 5: 1-5

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>2</sup>through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. <sup>3</sup>And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,

<sup>4</sup>and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, <sup>5</sup>and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

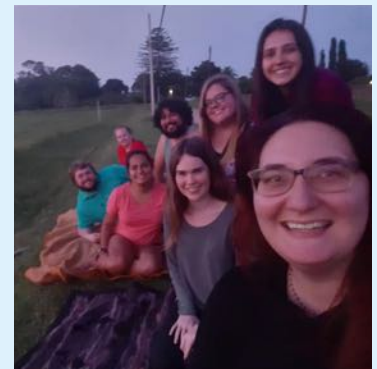


Photo: taking in the view in Uruguay

I have had highs and lows here, as with any experience, but I am certainly not suffering. What I have noticed is that the YAGM year takes away the "noise" of our daily lives, so we have to interact more with *why* our lows are actually lows. For instance, do I need to watch TV because it feels necessary or because it makes me feel less lonely?

I really like this passage. We are about at the halfway point through the year. I feel like I have accomplished a lot and have come so far. Learning to live alone in a foreign country can be difficult at times. If the year is a mountain, I feel like I've climbed to the top, and I want to bask in the moment before I go back down. There's still more to go, but the endurance I've used to get this far will give me the hope to make it the rest of the way.

Vaya con Dios  
(Go with God)



**Expectation:**  
Happy, peaceful  
retreat moment  
watching the sunset

**Reality:**  
Chris trying to pet  
both dogs (not  
pictured) at once,  
Ben trying to keep  
the dogs away, and  
lots of laughter and  
song

This newsletter has been a bit more difficult to write this month. Last year, I was balancing university, work, and staying social, and this year, I have had much less "homework". It actually has been harder for me to focus on the work I do have, such as newsletters and blogs, because I have more free time.

The resounding theme that I have been thinking about since our November retreat is "community". During our November retreat, in addition to being in a beautiful location, our cohort sang and laughed a lot. It really reenergized my soul. After that mountaintop experience, I felt like I came crashing down, because I didn't realize how much I felt like I had been missing that sense of community. The day before Thanksgiving, I suddenly felt better, and I wasn't sure why. I FaceTimed my cohort member later that day, and she told me she had prayed for me the day before. I like to think that her prayer helped lift my spirits.

Throughout December, I felt more up and down in terms of feeling that sense of community. I am definitely

grateful that I was able to spend Christmas Eve with my host family and New Year's Eve with another family of the congregation.

At the beginning of January, I was worried that the year would pass by slowly. However, families from my community invited me to spend time with them. That definitely helped me not to think as much about the lack of activity in the summer. I also spent some time at another volunteer's site, which was wonderful.

I am very grateful for the way my host community has embraced me and made sure I felt included. I want to do better to live in the moment and make the most of these friendships.

Blessings,  
Cassandra



I got to meet some YAGM alum visiting Argentina!

## SUNSHINES

I still am personally praying for the people on my shoutouts and prayers lists, but I have decided to use this section for highlighting the little things that make my day.

- There is a wonderful produce shop I can walk to that has fresh, inexpensive produce
- I have a beautiful view from my apartment overlooking treetops – very important considering I live in the city
  - From the start, the plan was to live with a host family until I get accustomed to the city and then to live in an apartment
- I still spend a lot of time with my host family and host community
- I got to see members of my cohort (other volunteers) recently
- I am doing more reading, cross-stitching, and meditation
- **I'm thankful for you, the reader, for accompanying me on this journey!**

# Featured Section: Escuelita de Navidad

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.

*Escuelita de Navidad* literally means "Little Christmas School". The school attached to my host church organizes this event, which is very similar to a Vacation Bible School in the US, including that both take place during the summertime. *Escuelita* went from 9 to 12, Monday through Wednesday, with a closing program Thursday evening.

Everyone gathered in the auditorium each morning, and then the kids split up into groups by age. Myself and another leader walked around with the 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup> graders. Each age group did the stations in a different order.

We started off by going to recreation, where kids could play outside. They played tag, used hula-hoops and jump ropes, and kicked around the soccer balls. The first day was very hot, so the kids didn't want to play too much in the sun. The next two days were more fun, and the kids enjoyed the activities more.

Then we went to *galletitas*, or "little cookies". The leaders prepared sugar cookie dough, and the first day, the kids rolled out the dough and used little cookie cutters to cut out shapes. The leaders put the cookies on trays and baked them. The second day, the kids put icing and sprinkles on the baked cookies. The third day, they did a craft since the cookies were finished. They received the cookies Thursday evening.

After *galletitas*, the kids sat down and ate the snacks that they brought. Our final station was crafts. The first day, the kids colored the paper Nativity scene figurines, and the leaders helped arrange the figurines on cardboard.



Picture of the kids coloring the Nativity figurines

The second day, the kids made a craft Christmas tree. The third day, they made candleholders out of paper bags by tracing shapes and poking holes in the outlines using pushpins. I helped prepare a lot of those crafts a few weeks in advance, so it was fun to watch them enjoy the crafts.

Finally, we all returned to the auditorium for a few announcements, a song, and then dismissal. Thursday evening, the program included a skit, which had a very nice Christmas message. The kids were split into 4 groups: red, blue, yellow, and green. Each "land" was made up entirely of its color, and only that color was correct. A white brick landed in the middle of each land, and was consequently kicked out of each one. The brick was a representation of Jesus becoming human and changing what humans believed was correct. After the skit, all the kids gathered around a manger and sang *Noche de Paz* (Silent Night).

## Pictures from the closing program



# SPANISH VOCAB

- **Acompañamiento** “accompaniment”
  - A word used very commonly here
- **Verano** “summer”
  - It's currently summer here, and I miss the winter
- **Todo tranquilo?** “All good?”
  - Used as a form of greeting
- **Merienda** “snack time”
  - Usually mid-afternoon snack since dinner is at 9 or later
- **Tereré** - cold infused tea drink (not direct translation)
  - A drink more common in Northern Argentina, and I am obsessed with it; it is very refreshing when it's hot out
- **Murga** – theatrical music genre (not direct translation)
  - Another volunteer and I got to watch a rehearsal; in February, our cohort will get to see them perform



Picture of a Murga Rehearsal

*Thank you so much for reading my newsletter!*

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

*[bit.ly/YAGM-Cassandra](https://bit.ly/YAGM-Cassandra)*

## BONUS PHOTOS:

**Left** - the Advent wreath at church

**Middle** - my host sister singing a song she wrote herself

**Right** - my host parents and me on Christmas Eve

