

Gathered, Empowered, Sent



GOOD NEWS from Zion's

a quarterly update highlighting God's work in and through our congregation

September 2021

Dear Members and Friends of Zion's:

God's grace and peace be with you this September day! I wanted to take a few minutes to share with you highlights of God's work in and through our congregation over the summer months. This is an opportunity for us to step back from the day-to-day and catch a 'big picture' view of how God's Holy Spirit has gathered, empowered, and sent us into the world to share Christ's love in a variety of ways. Since much of our worship, learning, and service has happened in small group gatherings for the past year and a half, this is also an attempt to catch you up on projects with which you may not have been directly involved. Finally, it is an opportunity to say THANK YOU—to God, for God's faithfulness to us along this journey, and to *you* for your support of time, money, prayer, and talent. We truly couldn't do this work without your help, and, on behalf of our congregation, I am grateful for your partnership.

In May, we celebrated the **Rite of Confirmation** for three young men—Xander McQuaide, Gavin Bush, and Mason Livingston. We also blessed and sent forth high school and college graduates and shared a “**Celebration of the Spirit**” outdoor fellowship event with music, cookies, and the chance to catch up with one another.



Celebrating our Confirmands



Celebrating CHAMPIONS OF FAITH at VBS

We were grateful to be able to offer **Vacation Bible School** in June after a hiatus last year. Working with Jonestown UMC, we spent three evenings learning about “Champions of Faith” in scripture, and how God's Holy Spirit equips us to be brave, bold, and loving champions, too!

Our ministry of **Healthcare Encouragement** continued throughout the summer months as we sponsored card and treat drives for the Renova Center (May),

UPMC Fredericksburg/Annville/Jonestown (June), Wellspan Good Samaritan (July), and the American House (August). The recipients of this ministry are always grateful for these tangible signs of God's love and encouragement, and we are grateful for *your* support through the hundreds of cards you made, purchased, signed, and given!



Healthcare Encouragement Ministry continues...



Feeding our community through Power Packs!

Power Packs also continued during the summer months, with Zion's volunteers once again providing summer food for families throughout the Northern Lebanon School District. Enrollment was very low when we began, but after we did a little advertising, and talking with the schools, we were able to increase the number of families served four-fold! During the coming school year, we will serve families at Jonestown and Fredericksburg Elementary Schools. This ministry is an outgrowth of our guiding principle that “we are in Jonestown for a reason”, and an example of one way we partner with community organizations to serve.



Sharing some Christmas in July JOY!

This summer we also tried two new ministries: celebrating **Christmas in July**, and meeting regularly around the campfire for “**Fireside Chats**” in my family’s backyard. Even as we grieve the temporary loss of traditions we’ve held dear, we are leaning into the new thing the Holy Spirit is doing in our midst, and, sometimes, it’s even fun! We plan to continue Fireside Chats in various backyards this fall...maybe it’ll even be cool enough for s’mores!



Fireside Chats with Pastor Caitlin

If you were in the building at all this summer, you know that preparations for our **fourth annual Back to School Blessings** event were also a big part of the summer! We served a total of 49 children from sixteen different families, providing each with a new pair of sneakers, a new pair of jeans, a new outfit for school, a backpack filled with school supplies, and the opportunity to choose their own new/gently used clothing, shoes, and coat. We are grateful for the contributions from Lebanon Evangelical Free Church who supported this event with their VBS offering—providing money and four TRUCK-LOADS full of clothing! It is a gift to be grounded, and called to serve, right here in our local community.



Getting ready for Back to School Blessings

That same weekend, we gathered students, teachers, parents, and staff for a “**Backpack Blessing**” as we begin another school year. This year’s message was “Be loved. Be kind. Be you.” with the hopes that everyone will remember that they are loved by God (no matter what!), called to share God’s love in the world, and uniquely and wonderfully created to shine just as they are. While it was, particularly, a message for students and staff, I think it’s a fitting message for all of us, especially as we continue to navigate life in a time of COVID.



I pray that this snapshot gives you a glimpse of the ways God is working in and through our congregation to share love and hope in the world. On behalf of the congregation, **THANK YOU for your financial, prayerful, and hands-on support that makes these ministries possible.** Please remember that we continue to have **COVID Compassion Funds** available for people who have lost income because of the pandemic; if you or someone you know is in need, please contact me so we can share this blessing.

I encourage you to review the “**Keeping Up with Zion’s**” publication that came with this one for some of the nitty-gritty behind the scenes information that helps keep ministry going, including a list of important upcoming dates. I look forward to worshipping, serving, and learning with you this fall, and continue to be grateful for your partnership in ministry.

In hope, *Pastor Caitlin Kurtz*