

Gathered, Empowered, Sent



GOOD NEWS from Zion's

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

November 2022

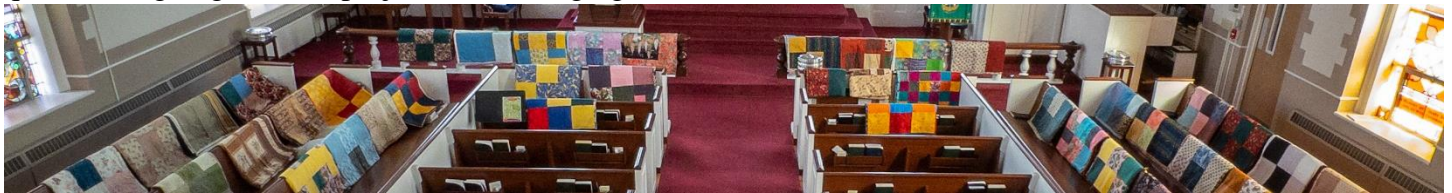
Dear Members and Friends of Zion's:

The past two months have been filled with GOOD NEWS stories! Some of them are ones we planned and prepared for, and others have simply been the powerful work of the Holy Spirit in our midst. Even as we were displaced from our sanctuary, and balancing many moving pieces (literally), God has been working in and through our congregation, and it is a privilege to share these stories of lives changed with you. THANK YOU for your partnership in ministry, and for all the ways you give of yourselves to proclaim the Gospel in word and deed.

On the last Sunday of September, we participated in **"God's Work, Our Hands"** Sunday by packing college care packages, prepping food collection bags for JOY pantry, planting mums around Jonestown, and continuing to work on our quilt project. While we strive to do God's work with our hands year-round, through this initiative we joined with other ELCA congregations across the nation to share our time, talent, and treasure in caring for our congregation, and local and global neighbors.



During that afternoon of service, we put the finishing touches on **40 Lutheran World Relief quilts**, which we blessed at the beginning of October, together with two pet blankets the children had made for the Humane Society of Lebanon. A total of 42 people contributed time, materials, and talent to create these works of art and warmth. The LWR quilts were then sent to the clearinghouse in New Windsor, MD, from where they will be shipped somewhere in the world in the next couple of months. Through the wonder of the internet, we will be able to track where they are sent! We are exploring options to acquire more fabric in the hopes of making these quilts an ongoing mission project of our congregation.



We had a beautiful afternoon for the **Blessing of the Animals service**, during which we welcomed many community members eager to give thanks to God for the gift of their pet, and all of God's beautiful creation.

We worshiped on the lawn before asking God's blessing upon the 15 or so dogs *and one baby calf!* A

representative from the Lebanon County Humane Society was also with us that day to receive food, leashes, and other pet supplies that people brought. In addition to being a nice time of fellowship, and a benefit for the Humane Society, this annual worship service is a simple way for new people to connect with our congregation and get a sense of who we are, and how God is working through us.



When we heard that JOY Pantry was experiencing an increase in clients due to the rising costs of food and fuel, and that their shelves were looking sparse, we moved our **annual food collection** forward a month, from November to October. *You responded with over*

564 pounds of food, toilet paper, and other essentials! THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU. As a reminder, we do collect food for JOY year round—there is a basket for contributions near the stained glass window by the Church Office—but, once a year, we do a concentrated collection, and we are so grateful for your help in feeding our neighbors.



The **Basket Raffle-Auction netted over \$4,000 for our 2023 Back to School Blessings Event**, with many community members partaking. Thank you to all who helped create or donate baskets, to those who baked, volunteered on the day of the event, and shopped. Especially during a year when endowment grants aren't available, these funds will make possible our continued care for students in our community.

In October we also had the great pleasure of getting to know the **Melekohva family** who have come to America to seek refuge from the ongoing war in Ukraine. We met them when the school nurse, knowing we keep clothing on hand for emergencies, contacted us for assistance. As we learned more about their story, we were able to partner with St. John's UCC and Jonestown UMC to outfit their apartment with necessities and are now providing English and cultural classes for the parents here at Zion's. The youngest child also recently enrolled in our preschool, and this week we are teaching them how to cook a Thanksgiving turkey! Their story is a powerful one, filled with a deep, enduring trust in God, a desire to serve others in all circumstances, and the power of community. As I have introduced them to various people in the congregation, they remark "Where do you keep finding such wonderful people! We love them all!" It has been a privilege, for me, to steward *your* gifts of hospitality and generosity as we surround this family with the love of God during their time of need. This relationship was not one we sought out, nor saw coming, but has been orchestrated, beautifully, by the Holy Spirit.



During these months we also celebrated with Logan and Sarah as they affirmed their baptism in **the rite of Confirmation** and gave **thanks to God for the saints** in our lives—past, present, and future. We welcomed back both the youth and adult **choirs**, and are slowly making headway on **the sanctuary restoration and electrical projects**. After several years of struggling with enrollment due to COVID precautions and trends, our **preschool** has also reached capacity again, and continues to be a place where students of all abilities and need find a home and grow in leaps and bounds.

It's been a season of much activity, surprise, flexibility, and patience, and I am so grateful for your partnership and gifts of time, talent, and treasure. As you consider year-end and Christmas giving, we ask that you keep Zion's in mind as God continues to work through our congregation to bless and change the world.

In hope

Pastor Caitlin