

Gathered, Empowered, Sent



GOOD NEWS from Zion's

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

June 2023

Dear Members and Friends of Zion's:

The beginning of summer usually means changed schedules, patterns, and rhythms. The full seasons of Lent and Easter have transitioned into the long 'season after Pentecost', a season focused on *growing* as disciples of Jesus. The changing of seasons is also a **great time to reflect and give thanks for what has been** and look forward to what is yet to come. It is my great privilege to share with you these GOOD NEWS stories, **testifying to God's work** in and through our congregation, over the past six months.



In December, we sponsored several families from Jonestown Elementary school with **Christmas gifts**, and provided gifts for three young adults who have aged-out of foster care through SHIFT, a new Lebanon (Supportive Housing Improving Foster Transition). SHIFT's founders, Jolyn and Kyle, preached in December, reminding us of how we are part of **God's bigger story**. Together, we can accomplish *so much more* than we can do alone; they thanked us for providing tangible signs of God's love and care to vulnerable young people.

Emma Wagner from Lutheran World Relief (LWR) visited with our Mission Ministry team to share a word of **thanks for our congregation's relentless support** of our global neighbors through both financial and physical gifts. Over the past year, *your generosity* supported LWR's work with \$5200, 34 much-needed baby care kits, 40 quilts, and, just this month, 54 personal care kits. We will continue to work on quilts year-round, and have created take-home kits of cut fabric for you to pick up and sew at home.



Believing that we are in Jonestown for a reason (one of our Guiding Principles), we called together the 28 congregations in our school district to **discern how to efficiently and effectively work together** to serve the new district-wide elementary school when it opens this fall. This initial meeting was Spirit-led and Spirit-filled and is opening doors beyond our greatest imagination. The congregations have decided to join together as a new 501c3, "The Northern Lebanon Ministerium". We have many hopes for this new organization, but the first priorities are establishing Release Time at the new school, continuing the Angel Tree and Power Pack programs, working together on Back to School Blessings, and **creating a stand-alone NL Clothing Closet** to meet the very real need in our community for affordable (free) clothing. This Clothing Closet will also have a branch in the middle/high school, allowing the NL Social Worker to immediately provide what is needed to students. We are very excited about this HUGE undertaking and partnership with the school district and so many congregations.

In response to feedback we received at our January Congregational Meeting, our Lent theme was "Creation and Community". We provided several opportunities for people to **commune with God and each other** in the great outdoors: a guided meditation event, hikes, and an outdoor campfire worship service. We also worked together to **start lettuce seedlings** for the Wittel Farm in Elizabethtown, where lettuce will eventually be harvested and distributed to food banks in Lancaster and Lebanon counties.





May saw the much-anticipated return of our **Developmental and Disabilities Dance**, welcoming over 70 individuals for an afternoon of games, dancing, laughter, and food; this event also raised over \$200 for DDS. At the dance, we shared about Rejoicing Spirits and invited everyone to attend...a few days later, six new people joined our final **Rejoicing Spirits** event of the school year! We look forward to our summer RS picnic in August, before weekly meals and worship services resume in September.

We celebrated the young people in our congregation during our annual **Youth Sunday Celebration**, publicly affirming their gifts and their faith. In a culture where isolation continues to threaten lives, helping young people believe that *they belong* here in our community is invaluable. We also celebrated with **Zion's Preschool** students and families at their graduation—gifting students with quilts handmade by members of our congregation, together with a personalized silhouette and prayer. This year's graduating class included the youngest son of the Melekhova family from Ukraine. His family was one of two that expressed great appreciation for the scholarship funds they've received this year, which made their child's education possible. **Thank you** for all the ways you encourage and provide for the youngest members of our community.



Your continued support of our Compassion Fund allows me to immediately respond to urgent requests for help. Over the past several months, the Compassion Fund has provided gas for a woman fleeing a domestic violence situation, funded a day of childcare for someone in a tight spot, completely outfitted a teenager on their way to an alternative school that will provide them a fresh start, and provided necessities to someone getting back on their feet after a medical emergency. **You have also helped** to provide meals and transportation to families in our congregation experiencing challenges and times of great change in their families. **I am grateful for your ever-willingness to serve, and your desire to share what God has first given to you.**

Earlier this year, we also celebrated the **completion of the second phase** of the Renew, Restore, Remain Capital Campaign—THANK you for your financial support of these repairs and renovations in our sanctuary!

As you can see, God has worked through our congregation in powerful ways over the past six months; some of which were expected, and some of which came about unexpectedly, through the Holy Spirit's power and lead. This summer we look forward to **sharing Vacation Bible School** with our community, and to **offering our**



building to IU-13 students who otherwise have nowhere to learn and grow this summer (the IU building recently flooded). We are also gearing up to **serve 4x as many students as usual at our Back to School Blessings** event (serving the entire school district for the first time) and eagerly anticipating movement on the NL Clothing Closet.

It is an exciting, and fruitful, time to be the Church *together* as we are *grounded* by God's grace, *empowered* through worship, Bible study, prayer, and time together, and *sent* to proclaim Christ's love in a multitude of ways. **We literally can't do this work without you, and we are grateful for your support** through prayer, money, time, and the sharing of your gifts. If you haven't been to worship in a while, would like to be involved in a new way, or have an idea about a way we could be serving in the world, I would love to speak with you. If you would like to financially support God's work here at Zion's, your gifts are most appreciated and can be made anytime at www.ZionsJonestown.org/giving or by check mailed to PO Box 658, Jonestown PA 17038.

Again, thank you. For your faith, your partnership, and your support.

--Pastor Caitlin