

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

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THE HERALD – JANUARY 2017

We are a congregation that strives to be an inviting, faithful, and growing presence in our community and in our world, with a passion for living and spreading the love of Jesus Christ by using our spiritual and material gifts in the service of all God's people

Jan 01	10:00 am	WORSHIP - CHRISTMAS I	(Simeon and Anna)
Jan 08	10:00 am	WORSHIP - BAPTISM	(Baptism of Jesus)
Jan 15	10:00 am	WORSHIP - EPIPHANY II	(Sermon at Nazareth)
Jan 22	10:00 am	WORSHIP - EPIPHANY III	(Great catch of fish)
Jan 29	10:00 am	WORSHIP - EPIPHANY IV	(Healing on the Sabbath)
Feb 05	10:00 am	WORSHIP - EPIPHANY V	(Healing Centurion's Slave)
	11:00 am	AGM (very important that EVERYONE attend)	
Feb 12	10:00 am	WORSHIP - EPIPHANY VI	(Tell John what you see and hear)
Feb 19	10:00 am	WORSHIP- EPIPHANY VII	(Woman weeps at Jesus' feet)
Feb 26	10:00 am	WORSHIP - TRANSFIGURATION	
Mar 01	7:00 pm	ASH WEDNESDAY	

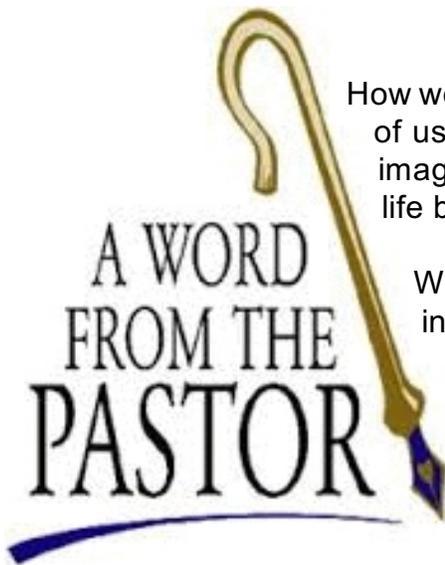
2016 Zion Council

Nick Beck (Chair) Wayne McCracken (Vice Chair)

Mickford Durgana Ginette McCracken Alethia McIntosh Ed Strath

Non-Council Positions

Ingrid Beck (Treasurer) Brian Cartwright (Recording Secretary)



How would your life be different if you were not a Christian? For some of us who have lived surrounded by Christian people, it's hard to imagine, but what if you had no interest in God? How would your life be less or more or just the same?

What would you miss about church? I would never sing out loud in public were it not for church on Sunday. Which of your friends would not be your friends? If you had never met the people you have met in Sunday school, how great a loss would that be? How would your family change? How would you spend your time differently? Would you be home reading the New York Times on Sunday mornings? What do you do because you are a Christian that makes you happy? Which religious activities could you do without? What would be easier if you weren't a Christian? Do you feel good about the time you spend helping strangers? Do you wish you still had all the money you've given away? Have there been experiences you would hate to have missed—hope-filled books you are glad you read, experiences of God's grace in worship, times you've cared for hurting people? If you were not a Christian, would your life be less interesting?

Every once in a while the disciples thought about how different their lives would have been if they had never met Jesus. It started so quietly. John the Baptist is standing with two of his students when Jesus walks by. John says, "That's the one. You know how cocky I can be, but I'm not worthy to tie his sandals."

The two disciples are understandably curious. They start following Jesus. He turns and asks, "What are you looking for?" They answer nervously, "We thought we would see where you're staying." In other words, "We don't have anything better to do, so we're wondering what you're doing." Jesus offers the invitation that will change their lives: "Come and see."

They stay with Jesus all day because he's interesting. They have no idea what they are getting themselves into. They don't know that they will end up leaving behind their nets, boats, homes, friends, work, and retirements. They will end up changing their ideas about almost everything.

Andrew goes to get his brother. "You have to come and see this guy," he says. Simon is dragged along, going more so that his brother will leave him alone than out of any great faith. When Jesus meets Simon, he says, "Your name is going to be Rock." The often-confused Simon is anything but a rock, but everything is starting to change. Most of the time, we move toward God in small steps taken as much out of curiosity as out of faith.

So what are we looking for? What are we looking for in worship? Why do we go to church? Some of us go because our parents didn't give us a choice growing up. For some of us, our mother's voice telling us to go to church somehow lodged in our minds, and we can't get rid of it. Some of us go because it's easier to go than to argue with our spouse about it.

Most of us probably don't go with great expectations. The religious reasons we have for going are mixed at best. We're interested in thinking about how we could live better lives, but only up to a point. If we're in worship for no good reason, that's okay. Lots of people find their way by accident.

Jesus says, "Come and see." The disciples stumble along, following without knowing where they are going, discovering well after the fact that they have wandered onto a path that leads to grace. "Come and see," Jesus says, and in John's Gospel the disciples soon taste water turned into wine, watch in horror as Jesus clears the temple, and listen with amazement to Jesus' words to Nicodemus, that the spirit of God blows wherever it wills. They stumble onto a way of life they have never imagined.

What are we looking for? Deep in our souls, we are looking for something to believe in and hold on to, something important enough to live for, and something big enough to claim our passions. We are looking for challenge and purpose. We are looking for God.

What begins with curiosity becomes a step toward grace. The emptiness we feel from time to time is God calling us to the paths that lead to meaning. God lets us know that we can look beyond our computers and coffee cups into the enchanted possibilities of grace. God is the one who makes us long for something that lasts. God draws us toward life even when we don't recognize what's happening.

"Come and see" is how the disciples' story begins. It's a wonderful line and a great way to start a story. "Come and see" is the invitation to explore, discover, and travel without knowing exactly where we are going, but to know that if we catch a glimpse of God, we will also catch a glimpse of who we can be. Come and see. Come and look for places where we've never been. Come and see what it means to hope, believe, and follow.

We are in church to open ourselves to God, who will lead us to new places. The people who follow Jesus end up doing the things Jesus did. They care for the hurting, listen to the lonely, feed the hungry, pray for the brokenhearted, bandage those who are wounded, do more than is expected. They look for God and find extraordinary lives.

The spirit of adventure is what calls us to worship. We come to seek the meaning of life, join with people on the journey, and ask God to help us see where grace invites us. We come to look at the gifts we've been given and the needs of the world. We come to discover the possibilities.

If we worship God, if we share our lives with other people looking for God, we will see beyond what we have assumed. If we look for God, we will find that God is looking for us, offering life.

OLIVE BRANCH NEWS

(Gleaned from Facebook)

It's Mentoring Month! "A mentor empowers a person to see a possible future, and believe it can be obtained." ~ Shawn Hitchcock

At The Olive Branch for Children, we encourage and foster mentorship. Our youths at the Zion and Peace Homes are developed to be mentors and guides for the younger children within our homes. The Montessori Outreach Program supports older children to help younger children in the classroom. Our Home Based Care and Montessori Outreach Programs encourage outreach staff to mentor each other, as well as program beneficiaries. Our Financial Autonomy Programs help women support one another through mentorship and camaraderie. Our Educational Outreach Programs foster mentorship, encouraging older students to support younger and newer students in our various programs.

Our Zion Home children are producing YouTube videos that teach Kiswahili. What a great way for anyone planning to visit Tanzania to start learning the language. What a talented group of children we are helping to raise! In addition to their Learn Swahili series, our kids will be featuring episodes of their Champions of the Planet series. They are environmental activists at the Zion Home. They believe it takes all of us to protect this beautiful planet. Our kids want to teach other young people about positive changes they can implement at home to help the planet.

In Tanzania epilepsy is often attributed to supernatural causes, such as witchcraft and curses. People with epilepsy and their families are stigmatized and suffer from discrimination. People also often believe that the disease is contagious, and it is often thought of as a mental illness. These harmful beliefs make people hesitant to get help. Despite the fact that epilepsy can be treated easily with daily, inexpensive medication, about three fourths of people with epilepsy living in low- and middle- income countries do not get the treatment they need (WHO)

The Olive Branch for Children works to raise awareness about epilepsy to reduce stigma and promote early-care. Our Home Based Care Team, besides doing community education, directly support epileptic clients and their families by providing health education, following up on their medication adherence and providing emotional support. In the photo is the caregiver of an epileptic client from the village of Luhanga. "Before, we thought my nephew was possessed, and the seizures were scary. After connecting with the Home Based Care provider in our community and receiving education, we understood that there is nothing to be afraid of. Nowadays my nephew uses medication which prevents his seizures, he has better health and is not considered mentally ill or cursed anymore."

