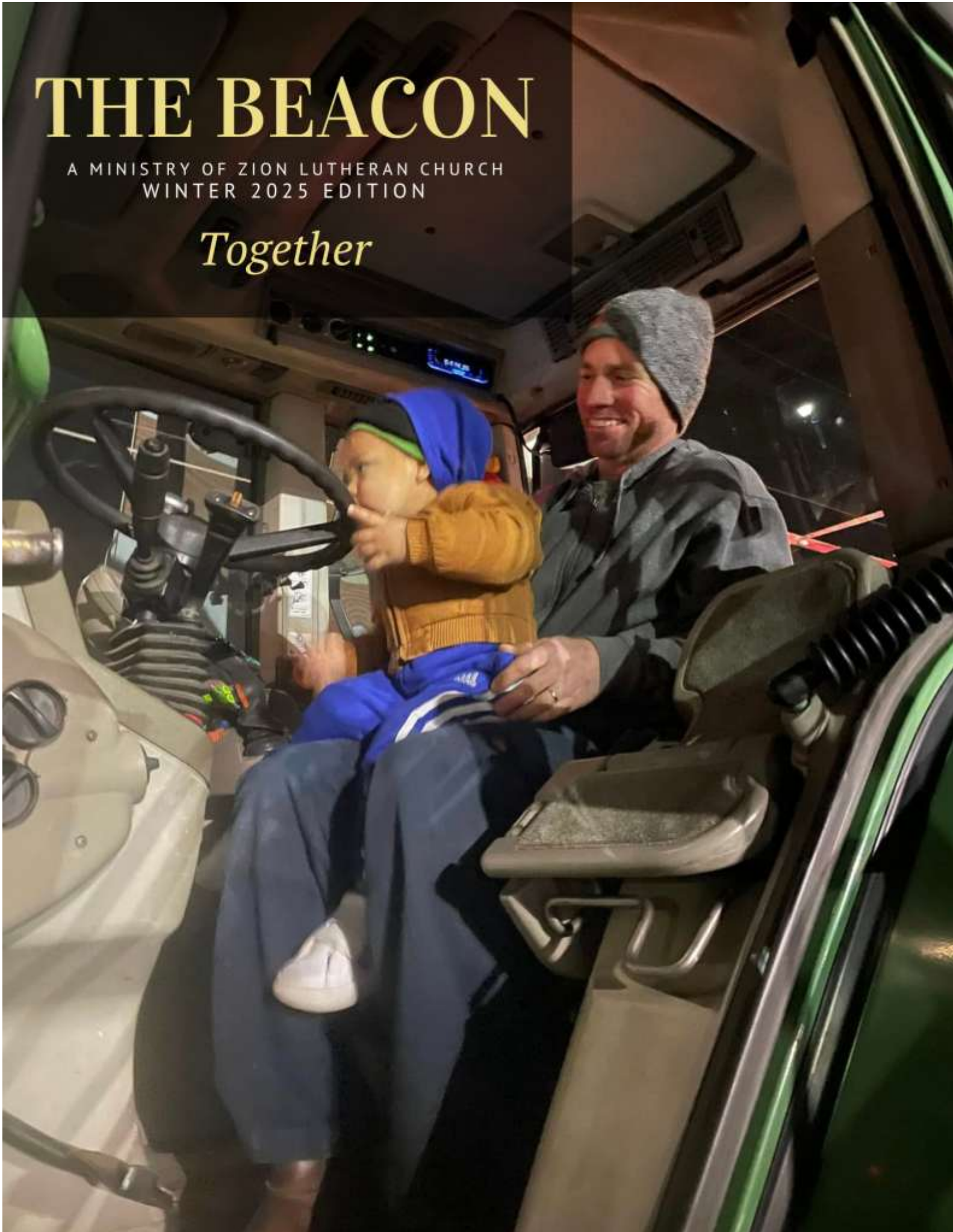


THE BEACON

A MINISTRY OF ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
WINTER 2025 EDITION

Together



Upcoming Events

First Sunday of the Month Confirmation from 4-6 p.m.

First Sunday of the Month Youth Group from 6-8 p.m.

First Thursdays of Month Table Talk at 6 p.m.

Second Monday of the Month Council Meeting

Third Wednesday of the Month JOY Luncheon from 12-2 p.m.

Last Monday of the Month Hope to Faith at 1 p.m.

November 19 J.O.Y. Luncheon (No Joy Luncheon in December)

November 22 & 23 Christ the King Worship

November 27 & 28 Office Closed for Thanksgiving

December 2 Decorating for Christmas at 9 a.m.

December 3 Wednesdays in Advent - Meal, Worship, and Children's Program starting at 6 p.m.

December 4 Table Talk at 6 p.m. (Bring your favorite dip to share)

December 6 Christmas in the Valley

December 7 Joint Worship and Children's Christmas Pageant at 10 a.m.

December 7 Advent Craft and Game Night (Youth Group too!)

December 10 Wednesdays in Advent - Meal, Worship, and Children's Program starting at 6 p.m.

December 14 Christmas Caroling at 5:30 p.m.

December 17 Wednesdays in Advent - Meal, Children's Program, and Blue Christmas starting at 6 p.m.

December 18 Cookie Exchange at Jamie Derr's Home at 6 p.m.

December 24 Family Worship at 4 p.m.

Candlelight Worship with Handbells and Holy Communion at 7 p.m.

Candlelight Worship with Orchestra, Choir, and Holy Communion at 10:30 p.m.

December 25-Jan 2 Church Office Closed

December 27 & 28 Lessons and Carols at 5 p.m., 9 a.m., and 11 a.m.

December 31 Deadline for Annual Report submissions to the Church Office

January 8 Table Talk at 6 p.m. (notice the change of date)

January 4 Confirmation and Youth Group

January 11 Footprints

January 19 DayOff Program

January 21 J.O.Y. Luncheon

January 24 Town Hall Meeting at 6 p.m.

January 25 Town Hall Meeting at 10:00 a.m.

February 1 Joint Worship Service at 10 a.m. with FootPrints and Annual Meeting following worship

February 8 SNOW DATE FOR ANNUAL MEETING

February 18 Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent

Share Christ's Love, Grow in Faith, and Serve Others



Our Mission

As a people of God, we share Christ's love, grow in faith, and serve others

Our Vision

Zion aspires to be a church where all are welcomed and loved; God's purpose for each of us is found; and lives are transformed.

Our Top Ministry Priorities for 2025

- **Leadership**

Called by the Spirit to be transformed as God's loving people, the Council will continue to discern where God is calling Zion in its defining of vision. We will be open to new ways and opportunities that God is calling us to serve beyond our building in sharing Christ's love. We will support one another in our ministries as we share cherished traditions and try new things.

- **Communication**

Celebrating new tools we have learned to communicate information, we will hone and plan strategies to more effectively use them to share what God is doing at Zion. We will use these tools and new avenues to share how God's love is nurturing and changing us.

- **Relationship Building**

With Jesus as our example and guide, we will grow in building relationships with one another and those beyond our building through practicing welcome and invitation. We rejoice and celebrate our generational diversity. We will practice grace and understanding as we make mistakes. We will focus on serving one another in love, especially those in need and who are often forgotten.





A WORD FROM PASTOR DIANE

*Do Less, Experience Wonder,
Hold on to Hope*

More than ever, we need a season of preparation, a season of hope. Things are super hard right now for many of us and for our country in so many different ways. We are in great need of time to refocus who we are putting our trust in and what we are hoping our lives will look like again. As much as this time usually leaves us scrambling to get ALL THE THINGS done before Christmas. Perhaps we might lean a little bit more into taking some time aside and cherishing who we spend it with and acknowledging how we are



feeling in these moments.

Our Advent midweek services will be focusing on these very things. Our first week will have us asking what can we let go of or erase from our to-do list in order to be more present with Christ during this time of Advent. The second week invites us to consider how we can experience wonder for God's works and be fed by wonder in the midst of this busy season. Our last week will be our Longest Night/ Blue Christmas observance that asks us how we can hold on to hope in the midst of the world's troubles.

As we sit with these questions, we also invite our children to be thoughtful about their thoughts and feelings during this time. We know that our experiences and expressions during these stressful times also

affects them. They are very aware of the emotional climate. We will be using the first *Inside Out* Pixar movie to talk about our emotions and what we are feeling, as well as how hope can help us in the midst of hard things.

We invite you to come as you are for dinner together in the Social Room at 6:00, Children's Activities beginning at 6:30, and worship at 7:00. December 3, 10, and 17. We welcome this time together in our chaotic world to remember Jesus' great love for it and us, and to hope together for that love to be known through us now more than ever.

Waiting hopefully,

Pastor Diane Ray



A WORD FROM PASTOR MATT

My dear friends in Christ,

I was working to put my kids to bed a few nights ago when I got a text message from a church member with a link to a video. As I am waiting for my two older boys to come upstairs, I listened to the link and I want to share a transcript of this video.

There was a man who applied for a job as a farm hand. The farmer asked for the farm hand's qualifications, and the other man said, "I can sleep through a storm." The farmer was puzzled by this. "I asked for your qualifications. I didn't ask you about your ability to sleep." The farmer really liked the guy so he decided to hire him anyways. One night, a really bad storm came ripping through the valley. The farmer leaped out of bed and he called out to his hired hand, and guess what? The farm hand was sound asleep. So the farmer and his wife got up and the

started looking around their entire farm, checking things to make sure that all was secure. They found that the shutters of the farmhouse had been securely fastened, a good supply of logs had been set next to the fireplace. They found that the farm tools had been placed in the storage shed safe from the elements, the bales of wheat had been bound and wrapped in tarpaulins, the tractor had been moved into its garage, the barn was properly locked tight and even the animals were calm because they had plenty of feed. All was well. It was in that moment that the farmer understood what his hired hand meant when he said "I can sleep through a storm."

I had the task this year to preach on All Saints Sunday. I have talked about numerous times throughout this past year that 2025 has been a difficult year. From the loss of some very young members here at Zion to Diane's cancer diagnosis, I am quite ready for a new year to come in. But we all experience these kind of years from time to time. To suffer is a gift because it means we are alive and not dead. Life is a gift and with life comes good times and bad times. I think the thing that has gotten us through this past year is all the work we did to get ready for this storm of sorts.

How many of us are ready for the storms of life? One thing that I tell all new couples is get life insurance now—to get at between 5 to 10 times your income in life insurance because something could happen and your death would become not only a devastating tragedy to your family, but it would become a financial burden to them as well. I remember sitting in my Thrivent representative's office choosing life

insurance plans when we first got married. It was weird thinking about death just as our life together was beginning. Now, I am eternally grateful we did this because finding life insurance with a medical condition such as cancer is very difficult and very expensive. We also had a lawyer draft up a will for us in case something were to happen. Again, it was weird sitting in the lawyer's office talking about death. It was even more difficult knowing that Pastor Diane was receiving chemo treatments for breast cancer. But we did it anyway because it was important for our family just in case the worse scenario would happen.

As we wrap up another year and begin a new one, how ready are you for the storms that are coming? How would you fair? Could you sleep through it? Don't get me wrong; I worry a great deal about what will happen to my kids if something were to happen to me, but I know all the hard work has been done. How we act in times of peace is a greater predictor of how we will act during a period of chaos and war. I hope you will take some time during your peaceful period to make sure you are ready for when that storm of life pops up and wrecks havoc on your life. It is okay to be scared during the storm and after the storm subsides, know that there is a whole community here ready to help you pick up the broken pieces, never fully being able to or expecting you to put the broken pieces back together like they use to be but rather, ready to help you create something new out of the brokenness that life's storm so often cause. You are not alone.

In Christ.

So, what's been happening?

Fire at the church!

The good news is that the brand new fire alarm system that cost over \$30,000 did its job very well in alerting us to where the smoke was coming from. Thankfully, the damage was minor and was the result of a bad motor in our HVAC system. We are very thankful to the fire fighters who got here in less than 5 minutes, identified the source of smoke, and helped us get the building ventilated. We learned a lot that day and found that most of our systems and plans worked perfectly. The only change we need to make is purchasing an additional Knox box for the front of the building. These boxes allow the fire department to gain access to our building without destroying our doors.



First Communion Class

The only requirement to receive communion is to be baptized. At Zion, it has become our tradition that parents, who know their children the best, should be the ones who decide when their child is ready to receive the sacrament. Every October, we offer a two Sunday class for kids interested in receiving or as a refresher class for those already receiving the sacrament. Here, Pastor Matt is talking to the kids about how we properly set the table for communion at worship. We started every class by sharing a meal as a reminder that Jesus always shows up at meal time.

Room Updates

A few months ago, the Council approved a plan to begin updating some of our spaces here at Zion. The Design Team has been hard at work planning and picking out items to brighten and modernize our building in the hope of creating a more welcoming space. To date, the design team has installed carpet in the Chapel, new flooring in the FootPrints Room and has recently installed some countertops and cabinets. The FootPrints room is becoming a great place to hold meetings and gatherings thanks in part to the mini fridge and stove already in this room. By adding the countertop and cabinets, we now have a great surface to serve food and hold meeting items. We have a lot more work to do. Stay tuned!





Reformation 2025



508 years ago, Martin Luther sparked a reform of Christianity when his 95 Theses against indulgences were published. 507 years later, we remember this time of great change and upheaval by doing what the Church always does: preach the word of God, celebrate the sacraments, raise up another generation of faithful followers, and offer praise to God. This year, we had four children in our community receive their first communion: Maddalyn Bikle, Ava Boss, William Fulton, and Paige Lizzi.

50 years ago...

Michael Williams and Georgia Poffenberger (not pictured are Donald McDermott, Dale Guyton and Cynthia Keller) became members of Zion Lutheran Church 50 years ago. We thank them and congratulate them on these 50 years of faithfully working to support and care for the mission and ministry of Zion Church!



The Children's Choir Performed!

Under the direction of Emily Fulton, the kids shared a song—To God be the Glory. The kids have been practicing the song twice a month during the Sunday School hour. The next time they perform is on December 7 at the Christmas Pageant. This is a combined worship service at 10 a.m. We look forward to hearing them sing again!



A Day Off from School!

Because what is more fun than to spend the day at church...said no one ever. But we proved that statement to be true again this year by spending the day at Jumbo's Pumpkin Patch. Jumbos was very gracious and paid the admission cost and gave each child a pumpkin. The kids explored all the attractions including a corn maze, new slide, trampoline, and playground equipment. Best of all, we got to enjoy a nice ride on one of their tractors. After we burned off a bunch of energy, we went back up to the barn for lunch and popsicles. After lunch, the kids checked out the animals and then we headed back to Zion to rest and relax after a long day at the farm.



You can help make the DayOff possible in the future. Consider sponsoring a child today for only \$50 dollars. It is our goal to keep the DayOff Program free for all kids. Consider making an investment in the life of a child. Do you have a family member who doesn't need anything for Christmas? Give the gift of a DayOff Sponsorship today. See page 24 for more details, and thank you for your generous support!





A Trip to Gettysburg

This past October, a group from Zion loaded up in our van and took a trip to Gettysburg to check out the Seminary Ridge Museum. The museum is located on the United Lutheran Seminary Campus. It offers a unique retelling of the first day of the battle. As part of the tour, we were able to go up into the famous copula where General Buford coordinated the battle on the first day. After our tour of the museum, Pastor Matt gave a tour of the battlefield and of the town itself. Of note, we visited the site where the 20th Maine held the end of the flank giving victory to the Union Army. After the tour, we visited the Dobbin House and enjoyed a meal together. We are planning a trip this spring, so stay tuned for more information.



For All the Saints

Every year, the Church sets time aside to remember and reflect on the lives of the faithful, departed saints. We tell stories of some of the great heroes of the faith as well as name those who have died. One of the great ministries of the Church is creating a space where people can come and mourn the death of someone they loved as well as hear the promise of the resurrection. On All Saints Sunday, we remember those who have died this past year, those who made a lasting impact on our faith, and those lost to our memory but known to God.

*We remember those who died
this past year...*

Corrine Humble
Richard Blumenauer
John Brunner, Jr.
Lucretia Reaves
Marc Antonio Long Crow
Gunsallus
James Palmer
Mark Newman, Ph. D.
Leslie Lent-Santora
Emil Kahihikolo
Frank Grunwald
Christa Grunwald
Junior Wiles
Lorene Huffer
William "Bim" Ahalt

Hailey Bergman takes an opportunity during worship to light a candle and say a prayer to God to remember her grandfather, Carl Leonard.



There are so many saints who have left a lasting impact on our lives. Every year, we invite people to write those names down so that we can remember them during our worship service.

Middletown Heritage Festival

The 41st Annual event was a success!

After a summer of little to no rain, the rain finally came the weekend of the Heritage Festival. But the rain didn't stop the throngs of people from Middletown from enjoying the day and its festivities. The day required a number of volunteers in our community to step up and make our participation possible. From cooks in the kitchen, to the cashiers, to the



people cleaning tables, to the folks who sat outside at our table—this day would not have been possible without you! So, thank you! And for those who came and enjoyed the festivities and made sure to come inside and buy a few pints of soup, a few turkey sandwiches, and some brownies—thank you!



Thank you for your support!

We sold out of almost all our food this year! It takes a great amount of help to make the Heritage Festival Lunch happen each year. From those who make the food to those who get to enjoy it, we are thankful for each of you!



Halloween Block Party

This past summer, Pastor Matt saw a grant opportunity from United Lutheran Seminary's Stewardship of Life Institute. The grant was simple—throw a block party. He had no plan in mind and really didn't think Zion would be a finalist since there were only 120 grants available and a lot of people interested. Still, he filled out the grant and was shocked when they chose Zion as a recipient. Now came the hard work—how do we throw a block party?



After talking to the leadership, it was decided that partnering with the Halloween Parade would be the best option. After making a few phone calls, everyone was on board. We bought enough hot dogs to feed 1000 people. We gathered around 30 volunteers and made it happen.



Burgess Miller said that it was great having us participate this year. Because we offered food, people stayed and talked with each other. The dancers from Dee Buchanan Studio of Dance provided some music and encouraged everyone to join them. It was a lot of fun and we built a lot of connections. We hope that we can continue to do this next year utilizing Thrivent Action Team grants and other private funding. Thank you to all our volunteers!

Community & Church Events



Christmas in the Valley - Volunteers Needed

Join us in celebrating the beginning of the holiday season at Middletown's annual Christmas in the Valley celebration, **Saturday, December 6th, at 7:00 p.m.**

We need approximately 10-15 adult volunteers to help at the church with ushering before and during the concert, as well as afterwards in the Social Room to help with cookies and punch. If you can help, please contact Jennifer Caulk or Mary Ann Marcantonio.



Middletown Valley Food Bank

Blessing Baskets for Thanksgiving

To quote our own Stephanie Moxley, "We have an amazing town!!" That is especially true when it comes to generosity of town and congregation. Every year, the Middletown Valley Food Bank, a ministry of Zion, hands out laundry baskets full of food items for Thanksgiving and the Holiday season. This year, in the midst of an economic slow down, many in our community are feeling the effects. These baskets make sure nobody in our community will go hungry on Thanksgiving. This year, the Middletown community came together and donated 287 baskets to the food bank! But the work doesn't stop once the baskets have been collected....

After the baskets are donated, they need to be taken from



the Main Cup back to the food bank for distribution.

The problem here is that the Food Bank does not have room for 287

baskets. To help

the food bank out, we have offered them a Sunday School classroom to store all their baskets. Volunteers from the food bank will come up and take a few down each day they are open to hand out to families in need. Volunteers take the baskets from the Main Cup across the street to Zion. It takes a lot of work but these volunteers make quick work of it. Well done, Middletown! We are glad to be a member of this community and are happy to help in

making sure no family goes hungry this Thanksgiving.



Photos courtesy of
Joanna Brown Homes



Being the Church...

Interview with Kaitlyn Leone by Mary Ann Marcantonio



If you haven't noticed, the number of young families is growing at Zion and one of those families is the Leones who attend the 9 o'clock service with their 11 month old daughter, Amelia. They saw Zion when driving through Middletown and decided to look up our website. Although many of us aren't tuned in with technology, this is how the younger generations get connected to faith based communities. From our website, they planned a visit, and after visiting us, they felt very much at home.

Kaitlyn and Greg are from opposite sides of the East Coast. Kaitlyn is from the deep south of Georgia and Greg is from Connecticut. Kaitlyn was from a close-knit family that rallied together around family medical problems and NASCAR watch parties. Greg on the other hand grew up in Connecticut with his mom and sister where baseball was his first love - his Dad took him to Yankee Stadium regularly. How in the world did their paths ever cross? A question I never got to ask, but they do say opposites attract!

Kaitlyn and Greg began looking for a community to settle down in and raise a future family. They were accustomed to walking trails and having easy access to retail shops and restaurants at their apartment in Reston, Virginia and expressed this to their agent who had suggested they consider Frederick. A wishlist item for their new home was the maneuverability for a wheelchair for Kaitlyn's father who is paralyzed. While traveling to Georgia and making arrangements for her uncle's funeral, a house in Middletown came on the market that met all of their requirements. After good advice from their agent they put an offer on the house. Amidst the sadness in the loss of her uncle and the joy of finding a home, their offer was accepted. Let's not forget one key thing here, they never stepped foot into the house but only through the trust they had in their agent. They have no regrets, they love their home. After all, it eventually brought them to Zion.

Kaitlyn grew up in a Baptist home, but in her childhood she attended church with her best friend whose mother was a music director and supplied her talents to many different churches giving Kaitlyn exposure to many different denominations. Her husband, Greg, on the other hand, grew up in an ELCA Lutheran Church. For Kaitlyn, the place of worship didn't matter as much as what they professed. When they stepped foot in Zion, it immediately felt like home for them. For Greg, it was like going back to his childhood church and Kaitlyn simply loved the warmth and peace the service radiated.

Kaitlyn attended Georgia Tech and earned two BS degrees, Industrial Design and Psychology. While in school there were two defining experiences that have shaped her into the young woman she has become. She was offered an opportunity to study abroad at the University of Oxford. This experience began with her first airplane trip and to the destination of Paris, not a bad first! The first half of this course was to

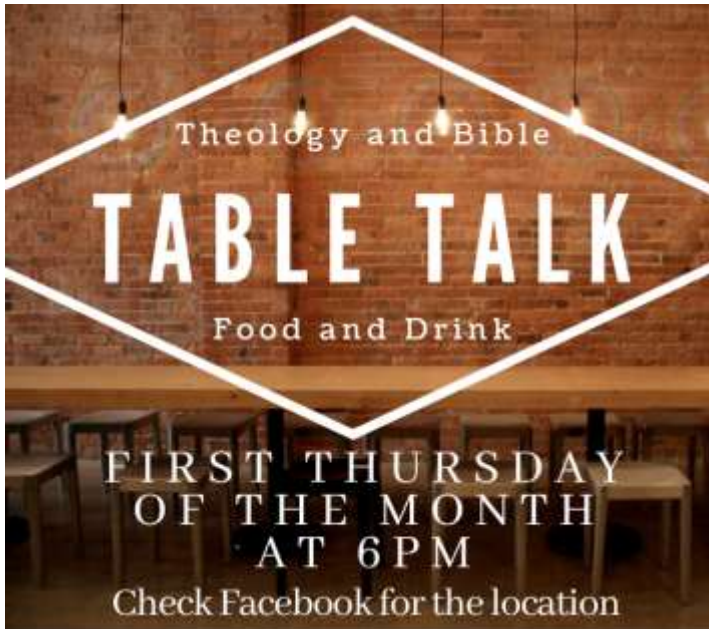
experience Europe, 13 countries, which in itself, is a blessing but the thriller of the trip was visiting many of the old churches and cathedrals of Europe. It is here where she felt that inner spirit come alive. The other defining moment was in her living arrangements her freshman year. She was concerned about the cost of education, room and board and the food plans provided. Weighing all options and keeping her budget as low as possible, she chose to live outside of the typical freshman dorms. At the time, this seemed to be a responsible decision but in the end she was isolated from her peers. As she approached the end of the school year, she recognized the lack of community in her life and the need to be around other people. In her sophomore year, that changed. She joined a Christian sorority where so much of the activity in their house was through shared time. One experience that has had a lasting effect on Kaitlyn revolved around a table. What appears to be a highlight for her was the gathering of her sorority sisters at the kitchen table. In the center of their table sat a mason jar with a variety of questions written on popsicle sticks that filled the jar. These questions would range from getting-to-know-you questions to theological debates. Often, her sisters would pull a stick out and discuss the question. Some viewpoints she agreed with, others not so sure and still others she totally disagreed. But through this whole experience, she learned how to have conversations with those who had different opinions, asking questions, listening, keeping the temperature down in heated discussions, defending her faith and ultimately learned that there are many roads to a deeper faith in Christ.

Kaitlyn works for Target now and you won't find her behind a register. Her line of work is all technology driven. She is a user experience designer whose objective is to understand the needs of the corporate designers and manufacturers that have contracted with Target, what tools would make their job easier and then design the software necessary to support their work. In order to be successful, training and follow-up are another essential part of her work. Retail progresses slowly and trends are rapidly changing; the developing process for what you bought today began nearly a year ago and trends are outdated by the time they get into the stores. The most successful retailers today can turn their merchandise around from design to in-store within a fraction of that time and Kaitlyn is ready to lead Target into this cutting edge through better technology.

Here are some quick and rapid facts about Kaitlyn. She has always been very creative. She has done woodworking and stained-glass projects. She enjoys reading, knitting, and participates currently in a Bbok club with her co-workers. She also enjoys hosting craft nights with friends. The one activity she is looking forward to is she and Greg being able to hike again which has been sidelined due to little Amelia. She is learning to adjust her priorities to the few hours in a day she can focus on herself as an individual and searching for the perfect balance with being a wife and working mom.

My take away from our visit...Kaitlyn's faith has been challenged many times along her life's journey. For instance, her family has many medical concerns. Her father has been hospitalized many times, once having to be brought back when his heart stopped during surgery. Her mother also recently went through being out of work and surgery for a rare spinal condition. These instances threaten their financial security and they've had some close brushes with bad health. Through it all her mother has always counseled her to pray and give what we can't control to God. In spite of the ups and downs, Kaitlyn eventually found the peace and calm that Christ offers. Her life has shown that trials in the face of faith have no victory over us because Jesus has conquered it all!

Christian Education



In December, we are going to start a study on the Nicene Creed which turned 1700 years old this year. For dinner in December, we are having “Dipmass.” Bring your favorite dip to share!

Sunday Mornings



**ADULT FORUM
MEETS IN THE CHAPEL
AT 10:00 A.M.
&
MUTUAL CARE AND SUPPORT
MEETS IN THE LIBRARY
AT 10:00 A.M.**

Unless otherwise noted, Sunday Morning Christian Education is always available! Grab a cup of coffee, a donut and join in the conversation no matter your age!

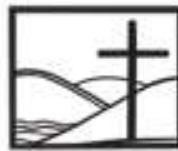
SUNDAY SCHOOL EDUCATION

SUNDAYS AT 10 A.M.

**ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE, &
HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES**

Adult Sunday School Calendar

Date	Facilitator	Topic	Comments
November 23	Donna Huffer & Diana Baker	The Power of the Holy Spirit's Name	Back of Chapel
November 30	Donna Huffer & Diana Baker	The Power of the Holy Spirit's Name	Back of Chapel
December 7	////////////////////	Combined Service – No Sunday School	//////////////////// ////
December 14	Donna Huffer	Because of Bethlehem: God Has a Face	Back of Chapel Book by Max Lucado (Amazon \$7.80)
December 21	Donna Huffer	Because of Bethlehem: Worship Works Wonders	Back of Chapel
December 28	Donna Huffer	Because of Bethlehem: God Guides the Wise	Back of Chapel



Mar-Lu-Ridge Camp & Retreat Center

Get ready for Summer 2026!

For program descriptions, information regarding our tiered pricing system (tiered prices are listed behind each program below), FAQs, and more, please visit our website:

www.mar-lu-ridge.org/summer-camp

Registration opens January 1, 2026. Early bird discount ends February 16, 2026.

	Juniors (Ages 6-10)	Middlers (Ages 11-14)	Senior High (Ages 15-17)	Family Camp (All ages!)
June 14-19	Day Camp 1 \$350 for 5 days <i>for day-to-day options see website</i>	Middler 1 \$600/\$550/\$500	SIT (Age 17) \$610/\$560/\$510	
	Junior 1 \$600/\$550/\$500			
	Jun. Horseback (Ages 8-10) \$690/\$645/\$600	Middler Horseback \$690/\$645/\$600		
June 21-26	Day Camp 2 \$350 for 5 days <i>for day-to-day options see website</i>	Middler 2 \$600/\$550/\$500	Adventure 1 (Ages 14-17) \$675/\$625/\$575	Family Camp 1 (June 24- June 27) <i>See website for pricing</i>
	Junior 2 \$600/\$550/\$500			
June 28- July 3	Day Camp 3 \$350 for 5 days <i>for day-to-day options see website</i>	Middler 3 \$600/\$550/\$500	Senior High \$630/\$580/\$530	
	Wacky & Wild (New Name!) \$610/\$560/\$510	Middler Pioneer \$610/\$560/\$510		
July 5-10		Night Owls (Ages 12-15) \$640/\$590/\$540		Family Camp Weekend (July 10-12) <i>See website for pricing</i>
July 12-17	Day Camp 5 \$350 for 5 days <i>for day-to-day options see website</i>	Middler 5 \$600/\$550/\$500	Adventure 2 (Ages 14-17) \$675/\$625/\$575	
	Junior 5 \$600/\$550/\$500			
	Music Camp** (Ages 8-12) \$610/\$560/\$510			
July 19-24	Jun. Nature Explorers \$610/\$560/\$510	Middler 6 \$600/\$550/\$500		Family Camp 2 (July 22-25) <i>See website for pricing</i>
		Middler Arts \$625/\$575/\$525		
July 26- 31	Junior 7 \$600/\$550/\$500	Middler 7 \$600/\$550/\$500		

****New for 2026!**

Rooted in Christ, we welcome ALL people to encounter God's love through sacred hospitality, deepening relationships, and care for Creation. **Full and partial scholarships are available for ANY family in need.** Contact the camp office for more information (301-874-5544). **We never turn campers away!**



We can't wait to see you this summer!



Worship Opportunities



Christ the King Sunday

A Journey through the Seasons

A special liturgy on the weekend of November 22 at all our worship services to help us wrap up the liturgical year and remind us of all that we have seen, heard, and learned.

Wednesdays in Advent

Advent Pause

Hoping with Intention in a Troubled World

Dinner begins
at 6 p.m.

Children's Activities
begin at 6:30 p.m.

Worship begins
at 7 p.m.



December 6 and 7

Sunday Morning Worship
10 a.m.

&

Saturday Worship
at 5 p.m.

Join us on Sunday Morning at 10 a.m. for the Christmas Pageant.

After worship, we are going to take a photo to update our church family photo.

Blue Christmas Worship

A service of Healing and
Hope for all who mourn
at Christmas

Wednesday,
December 17 at 7pm



CELEBRATE



CHRISTMAS

AT ZION THIS YEAR

JOIN US FOR A JOYFUL EVENING OF WORSHIP AND CELEBRATION!



FAMILY WORSHIP
AT 4 P.M.

CANDLELIGHT WITH
HANDBELLS AT 7 P.M.

CANDLELIGHT WITH CHOIR
AND ORCHESTRA AT 10:30 P.M.



THE FIRST SUNDAY OF EACH MONTH

FROM 4-6PM

AVAILABLE BOTH IN-PERSON AND ON ZOOM

Open to all Middle and High School Students who have not completed the program

//////////

IGNITE YOUR FAITH

YOUTH NIGHT

YOUTH GROUP WILL MEET ON FIRST SUNDAY OF MONTH FROM 6-8 P.M.

YOUTH GROUP IS OPEN TO 5TH GRADERS, ALL MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL AGE KIDS!

An opportunity for the youth to grow in spirit through worship, prayer, good food, fun games, and amazing company!

WE GOT A DAY OFF!

The Winter DayOff Program is on

Monday, January 19
at 9 a.m.

In the morning, we are going to hang out at church playing some games and then the kids are going to help make lunch.

After lunch, we are going to Urban Air
SPACE IS LIMITED! Please RSVP by January 8 to secure your spot.

Cost is FREE thanks to generous donations.

This is open to Elementary, Middle and High School Kids.

Extra chaperones are always needed and appreciated!!!!



DAYOFF
PROGRAM
REGISTRATION



urbanAir
ADVENTURE PARK



Baptism!

On October 12, we welcomed Melody Damskey into our church family through the sacrament of Holy Baptism.

Melody and her parents, Michael & Renee, have recently started attending worship at Zion. If you see them around, be sure to introduce yourself to them and welcome them into the Zion family.

Youth Ministry at Zion

Confirmation and Youth Group

The fall has been pretty busy in Confirmation and Youth Group. Youth ministry can be very difficult because kids are involved in so much and they have little free time. One more thing in their schedule is not always easy or doable. This fall, we have had a good group of kids come to confirmation and then stick around for Youth group.



We spent September at the park hiding kindness rocks. After the rocks, we hung out in the park. In October, we went over to Valley Ho Farm for a camp fire and hot dog roast. And this past month, we went up to Hagerstown to bowl. You don't need to be a member of Zion to participate and we do encourage kids to bring their friends. This year, we have a young woman from Transfiguration joining us for Youth Group!



Blessing Bibles and Sunday School Teachers

To start the new program year, we installed Sunday School teachers and Christmas Formation leaders. We also used this time to bless the Bibles that we will be using throughout the year. When children are baptized, we give each family a Spark Children's Bible.

When they enter

the 3rd grade, they are given a different Bible that is more appropriate for their reading level. When kids reach Confirmation, we give them a different Bible to use at class. And for Adults, we have both regular size print and large print. After each worship, we invite people to grab a Bible if they need one. This year, we gave out all our Bibles for the year which left us in a pickle. So, we applied for a Thrivent Action team grant to cover the cost. Each of our Bibles cost around \$25 so to be better stewards of our \$250 grant, we purchased used Bibles. If you need a Bible, let us know! We got a bunch to hand out! The best kind of Bible is one that is read and used.





2025 Footprints Upcoming Dates

January 11th

February 1st

February 8th

March 8th

Join us on the second Sunday of each month for Footprints!

Youth of all ages will gather together after the Prayer of the Day for a lesson and activity.

We will return to worship in time for communion.

If we have a 10 a.m. Joint Worship, then we will also have Footprints at that service.



Advent
CRAFT & Game Night
Sunday, December 7 at 6 p.m.

Bring a game to share. We will have a Wii set up in the social room. We will have some crafts you can do to help you celebrate Advent. We will have a taco bar for dinner.

The poster features a blue background with a 5x5 grid of 25 small Advent calendar squares on the left, each containing a number and a small illustration. On the right is a green wreath with red berries. In the bottom left corner are three lit red candles.

Christmas Pageant



Sunday, December 7
at 10 a.m.

New Star

"NEW STAR" is a Christmas play for children and teens. It tells the Christmas Story from the point of view of two stars (an Old Star and a New Star).

Pageant rehearsals will be held during the Sunday School hour. If your child cannot make the rehearsals, don't worry. We will find a place for them!

Ways to Give



Give something
unexpected
this
Christmas.

ELCA Good Gifts Tree

These little gifts make the perfect stocking stuffer or the perfect gift to the person who already has everything! ELCA Good Gifts gives people in developing countries the tools to better their family and community such as School supplies, vaccines and farm animals. Here is how it works: Pick an ornament off the tree (located in the chapel) and either visit www.ELCA.org/GoodGifts or drop a check/cash in the offering plate marked in the memo line—ELCA Good Gifts. 85% of donations received to the ELCA good gifts goes directly to people in developing countries. Your gift this Christmas can make a lasting and significant difference in someone's life. Give today and THANK YOU!

God's Global Barnyard

An animal can make a world of difference for a family in need. Animals provide food to eat, fertilizer to grow crops and offspring to sell at the market. With one gift, you can help a family escape the cycle of hunger and poverty for good.

 Cow A cow's milk, meat, fertilizer and calves can quickly strengthen a family's financial security. \$500	 Chicks Chicks begin laying eggs at just a few months old, offering nutritious, protein-rich meals for families who are hungry. \$10
 Goat Fresh milk from a goat is very nutritious and can be used to make products like yogurt and cheese to sell at the market. \$50	 Honeybees Bees pollinate plants and boost crop growth — helping the wider community. Soaps and candles can be made from their wax and sold at the local market. \$20
 Pig Within months after birth, piglets grow to weigh over 200 pounds — bringing a big payoff at the market. \$30	 Fish Farm A fish farm and training in good business economics can provide a lifetime of meals for a community. \$250

Give through your congregation by visiting ELCA.org/goodgifts or by sending a check to ELCA Good Gifts, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009. Please indicate your gift in the memo line of your check.

ELCAHAT202

ELCA.org/goodgifts



WEEKEND BACKPACKS
Hunger doesn't take the weekend off

The weekend Backpack Ministry meets the needs of students on the weekends when they do not receive food at school.

November: canned chicken or tuna.

December: chicken noddle & tomato

soup. January: boxed mac and cheese. February: granola bars and pretzels. March: shelf stable milk. Thank you!

OPPORTUNITIES FOR

Generosity

HERE AT ZION

Do you have that special person in your life who doesn't need anything this Christmas? We have some ways that you can share your generosity that would make a major impact and difference here at Zion. Just like the ELCA Good Gifts, we will have a special card that you can take to let your loved one know you gave a gift that made a difference here at Zion.

WE GOT A

DAY OFF!

3-4 times a year, we invite children from our congregation and community to join us on their day off from school. We spend the day playing games, exploring, and having fun. These events are offered free but do come at a cost. Are you interested in sponsoring a child in the Day Off Program? It only costs \$50 to sponsor one child. Perhaps your kids have all grown up. Give a gift today and make sure the next generation has the same amazing opportunities your children did. Got a parent who is hard to shop for at Mother's Day, Father's Day or a birthday? Sponsor a child in their honor.

Camp Scholarships

Mar-Lu-Ridge is an amazing place where relationships are formed each and every summer between other campers and with our Lord. At Zion, we offer a \$200 scholarship to anyone connected with Zion to go to camp. Last year, we sponsored 6 kids. This year, even more kids from Zion are going to camp which is amazing! You have an amazing opportunity to make Summer Camp at Mar-Lu-Ridge possible for a child here at Zion. Just like the Day Off Program, you can give in honor of someone, make it a gift for that hard-to-shop-for member of your family, or simply to make an impact in the life of a young person.



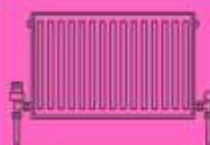
VBS is a great mission and ministry of Zion. We make sure every child who comes through our doors is welcome, fed, and included. We offer VBS free to everyone interested in participating, but that doesn't mean there isn't a cost.

It costs about \$50 a child to make VBS possible.

Make a contribution today and help make sure VBS remains a central and important ministry here at Zion. Give the gift of VBS today and help ensure that VBS remains a place where all children can learn, grow, and feel welcome.

Sponsor a New Chapel Chair

Be a part of Zion's transformation. The chapel is just the beginning. Your sponsorship will help us as we update our facility and become a more welcoming space for visitors, guests, members, and neighbors. Would you or your family be willing to sponsor a chair \$100. Maybe consider your donation in honor of or in memory a loved one. Your sponsorship would make a major difference in making this idea become reality



A Radiator

Our heating system in the church is getting older and harder to start up each year. We spend a significant sum of money to repair leaking pipes. We are beginning to research new options to heat the sanctuary but that will be a major expense. Your gift of a \$100 helps us make sure our holy space is warm and comfortable this winter and for many winters to come.

Poinsettia Orders and Lutheran World Relief (LWR) Monetary Gifts

The Altar Guild will be accepting poinsettia orders and LWR monetary gifts through December 2, 2025. Poinsettias and LWR gifts are \$11.00 each. All poinsettia orders and LWR gifts must be in by December 2. Order forms are on pages 25 and 26. Please complete the appropriate form and mail it with your check to the church (107 West Main Street, Middletown, MD 21769) or drop it off at the church office after Saturday evening or Sunday morning services. Forms have also been placed on the bookcase outside the church office.



2025 POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

Poinsettia orders will be accepted through December 2, 2025. Poinsettias are \$11.00 each. Please be sure to indicate below how many poinsettias you will be picking up. You may pick them up after the 10:30 p.m. Christmas Eve service.

Orders will be accepted by completing the form below and mailing it with a check to Zion Lutheran Church, 107 West Main Street, Middletown, MD 21769. Please mark your envelope "Poinsettia". You may also drop it off at the Church office before or after any service. **Orders must be received by December 2. No orders after that date please.**

2025 Order Form for Poinsettias

Each Poinsettia is \$11.00

Total Amount enclosed \$_____

In Memory of:

Given by:

In Honor of:

Given by:

I will pick up ____ poinsettias (Put in number you are picking up)

**Monetary Gift in Memory or Honor
of a Loved One
(Alternative to Poinsettia)**



Zion is providing an opportunity to remember or honor a loved one with a monetary gift to Lutheran World Relief (LWR)—an alternative to purchasing a poinsettia. Each gift is \$11.00. All gifts will be combined to make a purchase from the LWR gift catalog to help a family and/or a community in need.

Monetary gifts will be accepted through December 2, 2025, by completing the form below and mailing it with a check to Zion Lutheran Church, 107 West Main Street, Middletown, MD 21769. Please mark your envelope “LWR Gift”. You may also drop it off at the Church office before or after any service.

2025 Monetary Gift for LWR

Each gift is \$11.00

Total Amount enclosed \$_____

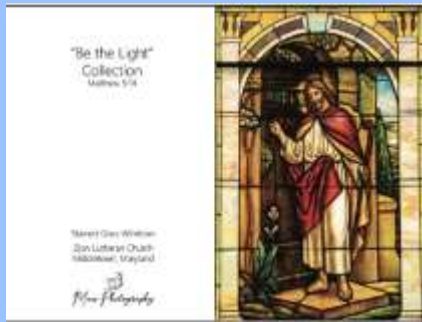
In Memory of:

Given by:

In Honor of:

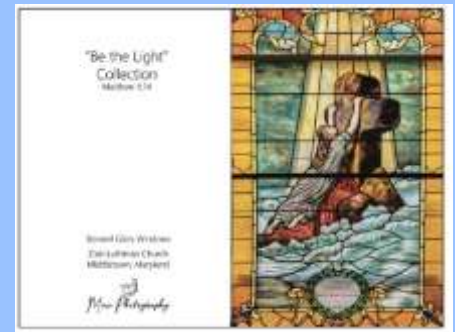
Given by:

Take Zion's treasured windows home with you!



- Perfect Christmas gift for friends, family or yourself
- Keepsake box includes 12 blank note cards (2 of each window)
- Photographed by a local artist, Reanna Muse
- \$25.00 per box
- All proceeds go to "With Open Arms" Mar-Lu-Ridge Renovation Project and Zion's Tanzania Support Project

You can purchase the Cards in the Church office



Last year, MVPHP served 202 children and 88 families, all made possible by our generous community.

Holiday In-Person Distribution will take place on Saturday, December 13th at the Middletown Volunteer Fire Department's Social Activities Building at 1 Fireman's Lane, Middletown, MD.

This year, we will support local families by donating the following items.

Teens and Children will receive:

- \$100 gift card of your choice to either Amazon or Walmart
- Younger aged children will receive a toy
- Older tweens and teens will receive a bag of toiletries

Families will receive:

- Families of 4 will receive a \$100 grocery card to either Safeway, Weis or Walmart
- Families of 5-7 will receive a \$150 grocery gift card
- Families of 8 or more will receive a \$200 gift card

How to register:

- Families that wish to participate in our program may register for assistance by visiting <https://www.mvphp.org/2025-holiday-program>
- Applicants must submit documentation of their residence and participation with state or federal agencies, or qualification under ALICE standards.
- Collection times will be issued after all requirements are met.

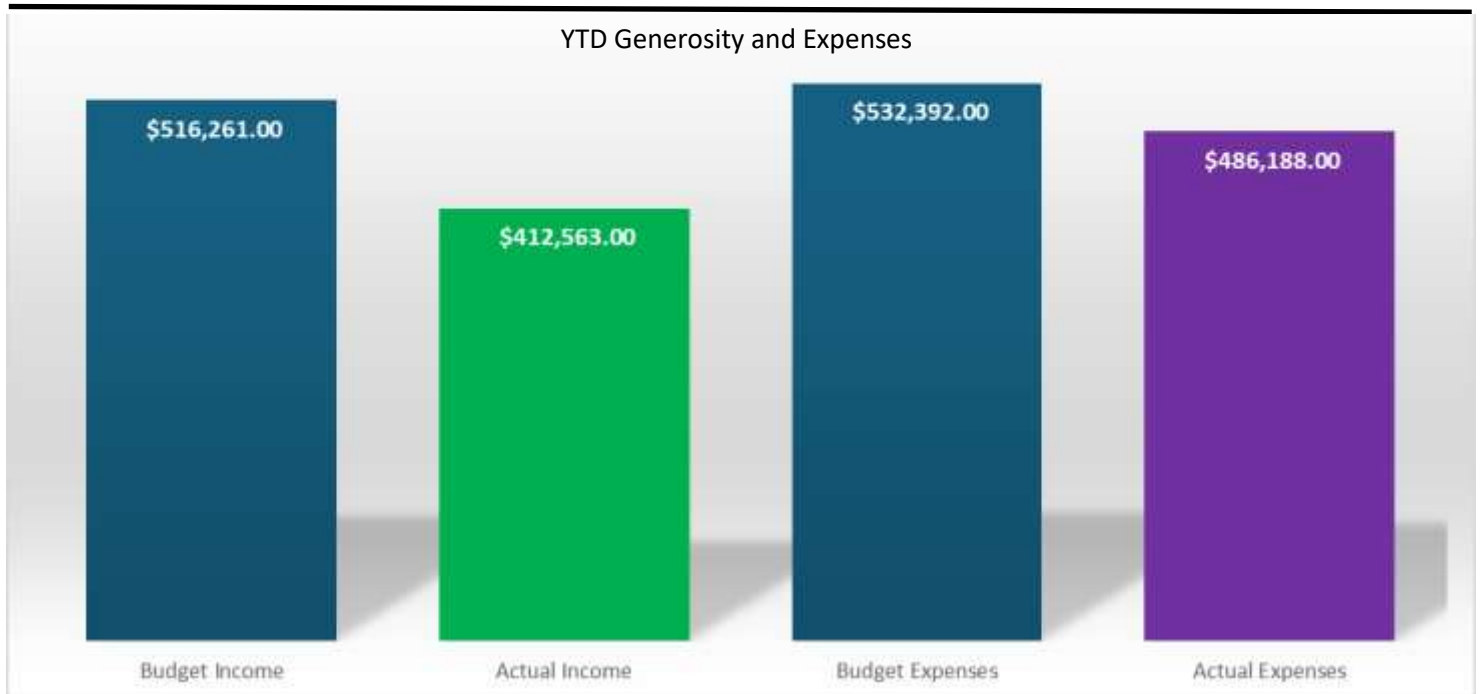
How to contribute:

- You may make a donation on our web donation page. On the dropdown menu, please select 2025 Holiday Assistance to make a donation to the general holiday fund, or 2025 Support-a-Family if you wish to support an entire local family.
- Toys, toiletries and other item donations will be collected at Christmas in the Valley and other events leading up to December 13th.
- If you have questions, please email us at mvphpmd@gmail.com or phone us at 301-371-3119.

Ministry Updates

Flower Chart and Coffee Hour Chart 2026

The 2025 flower chart will be posted outside the Living Library after Thanksgiving. The cost of the altar flowers is \$72.00 which includes two arrangements and delivery. We appreciate everyone who placed flowers on the altar for the glory of God. They are always appreciated and enjoyed by the congregation and especially by our homebound and nursing home members that receive them after the services. Beginning in 2026, in addition to flowers, you can now sponsor the coffee hour on Sunday Morning. It is the same price as the flowers and you can sponsor the coffee hour in memory or in honor of someone just as you would for the flowers. Sponsoring the coffee hour does not require you to purchase, make, or clean up. Our hospitality volunteers will continue to do that part.



This year we have not seen a recovery in our income from the summer months as we normally do. We understand that this is a hard time for many in our congregation. Any support to minimize this deficit will go a long way. Together, we can continue to build a strong foundation. Thank you for your support.

Budget/Income Information– YTD as of October 31, 2025

YTD Proposed Budget income \$516,261 vs

YTD Actual Income \$412,563.

YTD Proposed Budget Expense \$532,392 vs

YTD Actual Expenses \$486,188 .

Actual Income is less than expenses in Oct 2025 by \$73,625.



On the 4th Sunday of the month (time depends on each project), we will gather and do service projects. It is a great way to come together, learn and serve our neighbors and community!

On December 7, the Servants of Christ will be making "Christmas Card" boxes, filling them with candy for distribution to the food bank for the families they serve.



JOY +50 (Just Older Youth) Lunch

J.O.Y. 50+ seniors have been enjoying lunch and programs/bingo for three years now.

The J.O.Y 50+ meets on the third Wednesday at noon for lunch and a fun program. HOWEVER the November and December J.O.Y. 50+ lunch will be combined due to the way the holidays fall this year. Cost is still \$10 per person.

Advance reservation is a must for planning purposes, please call the Zion's office at 301-371-6500 or Alexa 301-514-4479 or email Alexa at alexamasser@gmail.com. Everyone is welcome!



Upcoming 2026 JOY 50+ Lunch Dates

Jan 21	Feb 18	Mar 18	Apr 15
May 20	Jun 17	Jul 15	Aug 19
Sep 16	Oct 21	Nov 18	

Snow policy: Joy +50 will follow the FPCS snow closings



Decorating Zion for Christmas!

Altar Guild members will be decorating the church for Christmas on December 2, 2025. We could use a little help if you have some free time.

We always have fun decorating, so we hope you can join us!



Would you be interested in advertising in Zion's Church Directory?

For more information please contact Lori Odell at

lori.odell@hiab.com.

Business Card - \$25.00

1/4 Page - \$50.00

1/2 Page - \$75.00

Whole Page - \$100.00



Zion Quilters would like to thank the congregation and the community for supporting us in our sock drive during the month of October. We delivered 588 socks plus some additional undergarments to Frederick Rescue Mission and they were received with much gratitude. Our heartfelt THANKS to everyone.

Hope

To

Faith

Hope to Faith

If you have experienced a loss recently or at any time in your life, please know that you are welcome to attend for a time of fellowship and food!

Contact Dixie Eichelberger at 301-667-7586 for more information.

A WORD FROM THE VALLEY

A PODCAST FROM ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
MIDDLETOWN, MD

A Word from the Valley is a our podcast that features Pastor Diane and Pastor Matt's sermons as well as some other special content that we will produce throughout the year. You can learn more by visiting our website, or search for "Word from the Valley" wherever you download your podcasts.



Creating Sacred Spaces

This past Lent on Wednesday nights, we talked about theology around why evangelism matters and how we, as a congregation, can become better at welcoming strangers, visitors, and each other into our sacred space. Let's keep these conversations going and work together to provide a sacred space for all people. Consider becoming a greeter. Right now, we only have one greeter stationed at the top of the ramp. It would be really nice to have an additional greeter at the bottom of the ramp to open the door and welcome people into Zion. Perhaps you can help us identify areas around Zion that need improvement. If you visit our website, we have created a page called Creating Sacred Spaces that has all the sermons

from the past Lent as well as some resources like a Mystery Worshiper Sheet that you can fill out to help identify areas we need to fix. Together, we continue to make Zion a Sacred Space.



CREATING SACRED SPACES

The need for welcome, hospitality, and love of neighbor



PastorShepherd.com

The whole church watched with nervous anticipation as the visitors sat where the Martins have sat for 42 years.

Noisy Offering Updates

September—Lutheran Disaster Response

\$348.27

October—Frederick Rescue Mission

\$250.31

Thank you to all who donated!



Upcoming Noisy Offerings

November 15th & 16th

ELCA World Hunger

December 15th & 16th

Religious Coalition

Thank you for Generosity!!!

*Homemade
Apple Butter*

We have pints and quarts still available
for purchase in the Church Office.

**\$6 for a
Pint**



Clothes Closet Update

We are open for donations on Saturday mornings
from 9 - 11 a.m. If you need to drop off after
hours, there is a drop location below the front
porch. Thank you!



Lee Ropp is Crushing Cans for Our Youth!

Lee Ropp has crushed and recycled 267,331 Aluminum
cans for the benefit of Zion's Youth and Family
Ministry! Cans can be dropped off on the deck of the
Clothes Closet.

Lee says "Keep em' Coming"

****Official Notice****

Town Hall and Annual Meeting Dates!

Town Hall—Saturday, January 24, 2025
at 6:00 p.m.

Town Hall—Sunday, January 25, 2025
at 10:00 a.m.

Annual Meeting—February 1, 2026

Snow Date—February 8, 2026

****stay tuned for Annual Meeting
information****

Tis the Season for Annual Reports

The Annual Report of the Congregation will be
available in print by Sunday, January 18. In order to
make this deadline, all reports need to be submitted
electronically by **December 31**. If your committee or
ministry does not require disclosure of financial
statements, you can submit your report early in
December. With limited staff in the Office, the
earlier that the reports are received, the better.
Please email reports to macbru@comcast.net.



At its heart, stewardship is not only about supporting the church financially. It is about how God connects us - with one another, with our neighbors, and with the wider world - through the gifts we share.

This year, we invite you to think of stewardship as the ways we help build these connections, for we are a community rich with gifts:

- Time connects us in worship, prayer, and service.
- Talents connect us by sharing skills and gifts that strengthen the body of Christ.
- Treasure connects us by resourcing ministries that bless our community and beyond.

On your pledge card, you will see opportunities to share your talents with us and how you want to make an impact here at Zion. Every gift — whether it is a moment of service, a skill offered, a financial contribution, or a story shared — is part of how God is weaving us together. As Saint Paul says, “the body does not consist of one member but of many.” You matter to the body of Christ! St. Paul goes onto say, “If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.” Don’t underestimate the impact you can make towards our mission here Zion!

Please bring your completed pledge card by Sunday, December 7, when we will dedicate our gifts and celebrate the ways God is connecting us in love and mission. You can bring your card in any time and place it in the clear box as you enter worship. Or if you would prefer to submit your pledge card online, scan on the QR code or visit our website to find the link. Whether you fill it out by hand or digitally, please take the time to prayerfully consider all the ways you can be generous this coming year.



Fill out a 2026 Pledge Card online!

Over the next few weeks, we are going to be talking about the benefits of working together to accomplish our mission. We are a congregation made up of many different members. Each of us is critical to overall health of the body. We are stronger when we are together, but learning to work together is a difficult task. Nobody likes group work, but working together is essential to being Christ’s representatives to the world. We hope that the topics we cover will come up over your dining room table. To help you have these conversations, we have put together a resource page for you to use. Here you will find the video we shared in worship as well as some extra resources. Visit www.ZionMiddletown.org/Stewardship or scan the QR Code.



Learn More about Stewardship

Every year, our goal is to get 60% of our budget pledged. Help make our goal a reality by completing your pledge card today. And thank you for all the ways you support Zion and the mission we are called to do: As a people of God, we share Christ’s love, grow in faith, and serve others.



Show care for all your neighbors
this Advent season by
"Stocking the Streets" with
bags that include the items
most frequently requested
by individuals
facing homelessness.



ELCA World Hunger

You can bring your Stocking the Streets Bag on Christmas Eve and place it in the box in the chapel. After Christmas, we will take them down to the Frederick Rescue Mission for them to use in their work of caring for the unhoused. See the back of this page for what you can put in your Stocking the Streets Bag.

"Stocking the Streets" Bags

"Stocking the Streets" is an effort by ELCA World Hunger and your community to care for all our neighbors, some of whom lack a roof over their heads. A "Stocking the Streets" bag includes the items most frequently requested by individuals facing homelessness.

Post this list of items next to your Christmas tree or Advent calendar, along with the bag or bags you will fill. Go shopping — together with family, friends or your church community — early in the season for all the items on the list. Starting on the 12th day of Advent, put one item per day in the "Stocking the Streets" bag. In the days following Christmas, you will be ready to pass out your bags when needed or bring them to a local social services organization that works with unhoused folks.

Some notes as you prepare and give out your bags:

You can give these bags to individuals you meet who are homeless or donate them to a local organization that works with the homeless.

Feel free to contact local agencies working with homeless folks for suggested items that are more critical locally.

Do NOT give out money.

Gallon bags work well, but you can also consider sewing your own.

COLOR!



First aid kits



Hygiene wipes



New socks



Travel-sized rain poncho



Hand warmers



Restaurant gift card



Flashlight with batteries



Preloaded transit card



Resealable plastic bags



Emergency blanket



New underwear



Homemade snacks



Melody Damskey



*With our deepest sympathy we keep in
our thoughts and prayers the families of:*
William "Bim" Ahalt



Shirley Hyssong, Robbie Kinna, The Family of April Box, The Yonge Family, Carrie Basler, Dennis McGinnis, John Hughes, Linda Kinna-Engel, Dave Gouker, Pat McIntosh, Ron Moss, Richard Brandenburg, Ruth Brant, Vicki Ringwelski, Elsie Warnock, David Shupe, Meredith Kinna, George Engel, Jo Ahalt, Glenn Little, Sandy Bidle, Catherine Brown, Tristan Swiney, J. Richard Staples, All Government

Workers, Pastor Diane Day, Beverly Smith, Dana Carmichael, Brenda Ward, The Gunsallus Family, Samn Huffer, Pat Hansen, Eric Kinna, Ronnie Kinna, Linda Stottlemeyer, Anita, Gary, Bruce Albright, Marty Appleby, Judith Smith, Jackie Bello, Trish Tollefson, Addison Hopson, Kevin Kinna, Deb Kahihikolo

Please be sure the church is notified if you are hospitalized and if you wish to be placed on the prayer list or would like visitation. For the most up-to-date prayer list, visit our website and look under the member's tab.

Discover Zion Lutheran Church

Get Involved • Stay Connected • Grow with Us



Scan me!

Evangelical Lutheran Church Zion
107 W Main Street
Middletown MD 21769

www.ZionMiddletown.org



The work and mission at Zion can only happen through your gifts of time, talent and treasure. We cannot do our work without your support. To give financially, please give either online or drop your Offering in the offering plate as the ushers come up and down the pews. You can also scan the QR code to be taken to our online giving portal.

AND THANK YOU!