*Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, all of you according to your ways, says the Lord God. Repent and turn from all your transgressions; so that they shall not be a stumbling block of iniquity to you. Cast away from you all the transgressions that you have committed against me, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says the Lord God. Turn, then, and live.* -Ezekiel 18:30-32

Someone asked me recently why we have to have a dreary season like Lent, with all its somberness and austerity. Isn’t our God a god of love, life and light? Why should we need to celebrate lent with all its unpleasantness? Well, it is not as if our God chooses death and

suffering for us as if it is a good thing we must be tested through. As it says in Ezekiel, God has no pleasure in the death (or suffering) of anyone, instead God wants us to turn and live! To be people.

And that’s really, for me, what the season of Lent is about. It’s about permission to be human, permission to live. If all we celebrated all year long was nothing but sunshine and rainbows like Easter, we might start to think that God only works through prosperity and good times. We would get the wrong idea that we then have to put on a pleasant face when we come to church, and pretend that everything is going okay in our lives so that we aren’t left out of God’s faithful children. But this isn’t true. The witness of scripture from Ezekiel to the Gospels and everywhere in-between shows how God works with people in adversity just as much as God works with people who have good things going on. If anything, God promises even more prominently the opposite: that God will be with us in our times of struggle. (Like psalm 23 where God promises that no matter how deep the valley, or how dark things may seem, God will be there pursuing us every day with goodness and mercy.)

So here we have baked into our liturgical year a messy and somber time of Lent, so that we know that it is okay to be messy and somber people sometimes. You don’t have to put on a pleasant face, but you can wear your humanness to church, with all its different emotions struggles and joys and everything in between. Turn, then and live, says God.

Live your life full of its ups and downs. Lent is a time for us to remember that it is okay to be ourselves. We are reminded to be alive, and to share that life with others. We are reminded to love as we have been loved: in good times and in bad. We are reminded that we are dust and to dust we shall return, but also in the meantime, God has breathed life into this dust. And living is what God desires.

Where can you get yourself a new heart and a new spirit? Well, the small word of permission that we receive in lent is a good wellspring of refreshment. In Christ we no longer have to worry about ourselves, for we know God is compassionate and merciful.

And once we practice compassion on ourselves, we can turn, live, and share that same compassion with others. This is why we say Lent is also a time of repentance. But repentance isn’t pretending you are better than you are. It isn’t denying yourself, or beating yourself up because you were wrong. That is not the fast God chooses for us. Instead, repentance is about living into yourself, and having our heads turned in a new direction by God’s love.

Once you have permission to be you, God also has one more gift: life and love. And that’s what turns our heads away from ways that we have messed up in the past. It is only the strength of God’s faith and promises that can turn our heads and make us new.

-Pastor Tommy.



Daylight Savings Time starts Sunday March 12th. Be sure to set your clocks **ahead** one hour on Saturday night !

Lenten Mid-week services will be held each Wednesday during Lent (all the Wednesdays in March!). The services will begin at 7:00 p.m.

Soup Suppers are back! Join us for soup and bread each Wednesday during Lent (March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29). The suppers begin at 6:00 p.m. There is a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board in Augustana Hall for donations of soup, bread, and desserts. Thanks for sharing your soup making skills with us!

At its February meeting, the Council accepted, with regret and deep appreciation, the resignation of Shirley Leitgeb as our church secretary effective February 28th. Shirley has been in the church office for eleven years. We thank her for her many years of service to Zion. Shirley was honored with a coffee hour on February 26th.

The Congregation Council will host an Easter Breakfast on Easter Sunday, April 9th from 9:00 to 10:00 a.m. The menu includes egg dishes, muffins, fruit, juice and milk. Welcome!

For those people who really like to plan ahead, our 2023 church picnic will be held on Sunday, August 13th immediately following worship. It will be held at Frenette Park (formally Pines Park). More information to come!

The Backpack Buddies Program received $677.00 from Jack’s Fresh Market Round-Up program in January. Sion Lutheran Church in Chatham, MI sent a $500 check in February for support of the program. Zion thanks you and the hungry kids thank you!

The church will be open Monday, Wednesdays and Thursdays from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Stop in or call anytime!

Pastor Tommy will be making home visits on Thursday afternoons. If you would like Pastor to stop by, call the church office!

Confirmation Class will be held June 5-9, 2023. Please mark your calendars and pass the word. More information will be sent to all confirmands.

**Backpack Buddies Report for 2022**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Month | Bags Distributed | Volunteer Hours |
| January | 272 | 25 |
| February | 120 plus 60 pot pies | 26 |
| March | 268 plus 42 pot pies | 18 |
| April | 320 | 29 |
| May | 340 | 31 |
| June | 252 | 40 |
| July | 284 | 17 |
| August | 308 | 18 |
| September | 316 | 25 |
| October | 372 | 24 |
| November | 496 | 28 |
| December | 160 | 24 |
| TOTAL BAGS | 3508 plus 102 pot pies | 305 |

Total expenses for the year were $18,654.57. There were also several $250 grants from Thrivent and money given directly to Jack’s toward our expenses.

Thanks to Jo-Nell Berger and Kathy Peterson for heading up this important ministry. Others who assist are Janet Krueger, Linda Levin, Kay MacGregor, Laurie Nauman, Lila Panek and Carley Schoenow.

Thanks to all who participated in the 137th Annual Meeting of the congregation. It was good to hear reports of all the good things our congregation is doing! Extra annual reports are available if you’d like to have a copy to read.

We are looking for volunteers to help count the offering! Please see Cyndee Miske, Pastor Tommy or Linda Levin for more information. Thanks to all who are assisting: Mary Ansell, Jo-Nell Berger, Dorothy Brandstrom, Carla Flodin, Kaye Jarski, Pat Lamb, Linda Levin, Kay MacGregor, Brian Nelson, Kathy Peterson, and Cathy Wargo.



TheMarch **NOISY OFFERING** will be going to CBC. Thanks for your generous support of this organization.

**We need some help on our church committees!** The work of the congregation is done most effectively through committees. We have the following committees: Worship and Music, Evangelism and Membership, Finance and Stewardship, Christian Education and Youth, Property and Personnel. Most committees meet once per quarter (four times per year). We need your ideas and your participation! Please contact Pastor Tommy, Linda Levin or leave a message in the church office if you are interested.

**Looking ahead….**

+A Maundy Thursday Service will be held at Zion on Thursday, April 6, 2023 at 7:00 in the sanctuary.

+The Manistique Ministerial Association Good Friday Service will be at the First Baptist Church on Friday,

April 7, 2023 at 1:00 p.m.

+The Good Friday Service at Zion is on Friday, April 7, 2023 at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary.

+Easter Vigil Service in the Zion Parking Lot on Saturday, April 8, 2023 at 5:00 p.m.

+Manistique Ministerial Association Easter Sunrise Service at Lakeview Cemetery on Sunday, April 9 at 7:00 a.m.

+The Easter Breakfast will be from 9:00 to 10:00am with worship to follow at Zion on Sunday, April 9, 2023 at 10:30 a.m.

Congregation Council Highlights – February

+The reorganizational meeting of the Congregation Council was held in February. We welcomed new members Ken Groh, Todd Kangas and Cyndee Miske. Council members signed up for committees and ushering duties.

+The following officers were elected: President-Linda Levin, Vice-President-Donna Mott, and Secretary-Cyndee Miske. Naomi Fletcher was appointed treasurer. Cyndee Miske was appointed financial secretary and Tom Broullire was appointed chair of the Ahlstrom Trust Fund and Endowment Fund Committee.

+The treasurer’s report showed January income of $19,399.55 with expenses of $12,892.37.

+Ash Wednesday services will be held at 12:00 noon and 7:00 p.m. on February 22nd.

+Mid-week Lenten services will be on Wednesday evenings at 7:00 p.m.

+There will be Soup Suppers preceding each mid-week Lenten service beginning at 6:00 p.m. The Soup Suppers will be on March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29.

+The Congregation Council will host an Easter breakfast on Easter Sunday, April 9, beginning at 9:00 a.m.

+The Church Picnic will be held on Sunday, August 13, 2023 immediately following worship at Frenette Park.

+Noisy Offering designations were made for each month.

+Information on income and expenses will be available in the bulletin each Sunday.

+We are still looking for someone to do the snow blowing and shoveling.

+The Altar picture from Bethany Lutheran Church is being framed. It turned out to be a little trickier than was first thought.

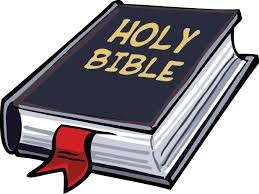
+Confirmation will be held June 5-9, 2023. More information to come!

+The Council accepted, with regret and thanks, the resignation of church secretary Shirley Leitgeb.

+The Council is looking to hire a new church secretary. The job is six hours per week, three hours on Monday morning and three on Wednesday. The salary is $3,500.

+The church will be open Monday through Thursday mornings from 9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. beginning February 27th.

**Join us for Bible Study**



**The Monday night Bible study group will be meeting at 6:30, every 2nd and 4th Mondays . Pr. Richter will be leading our study on the Gospel of John. We will meet in person in Augustana Hall. Be sure to wear your mask and social distance. If you have any questions about this opportunity for study, please contact the office.**

**Upcoming Scripture Readings**

**March 5** —First Sunday in Lent

Genesis 12:1-4a, Psalm 121, Romans 4:1-5, 13-17, John 3:1-17

**March 12**—Second Sunday in Lent

Exodus 17:1-7, Psalm 95, Romans 5:1-11, John 4:5-42

**March 19**—Third Sunday in Lent

1 Samuel 16: 1-13, Psalm 23, Ephesians 5:8-14, John 9:1-41

**March 26**—Fourth Sunday in Lent

Ezekiel 37:1-14, Psalm 130, Romans 8:6-11, John 11:1-45

**Gifts to our congregation have been given in memory of**

**Tracy Wills-Hall**

From Linda Levin to Zion’s Endowment Fund

**Church Attendance Report**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Saturday | Sunday | Zoom |
| February 4/5 | 15 | 47 | 5 |
| February 11/12 | 15 | 37 | 5 |
| February 18/19 | 12 | 43 | 5 |
| February 25/26 | 12 | 48 | 7 |

**CONTACT US:**

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[www.zionlutheran-manistique.org](http://www.firstlutheran-gladstone.org)or find us on facebook.com

**Rev. Tommy Richter, Pastor**

Office: 906- 341-5427 Home 286-4383

**Secretary:** Cyndee Miske

[office@zionlutheran-manistique.org](mailto:office@zionlutheran-manistique.org)

**Musician:** Linda Levin

**Choir Director:** Rebecca Peterson

**Custodian:** Pat Toennessen

**Congregation Council**:

Linda Levin, President

Donna Mott, Vice President

Cyndee Miske, Secretary

Jo-Nell Berger

Ken Groh

Ruth Jones

Todd Kangas

Janet Krueger

Peter Mathson

Bonnie Moody

Teddy Nelson

Rebecca Peterson

Naomi Fletcher, Treasurer

Cyndee Miske, Financial Secretary



A congregation of the Northern Great Lakes Synod

of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.