



Zion Lutheran Monthly



December 2013

“IMMANUEL”—BLESSING OR CURSE?

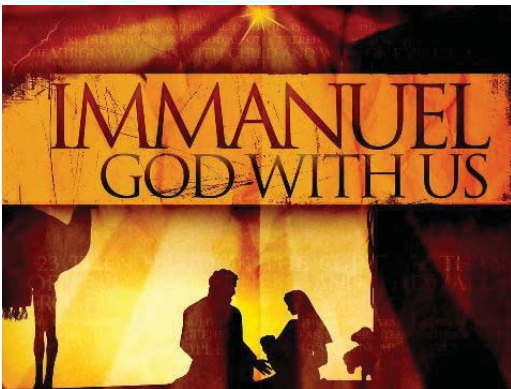
Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, “Ask a sign of the LORD our God; let it be deep as Sheol or high as heaven.” But Ahaz said, “I will not ask, and I will not put the LORD to the test.” And he said, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it too little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the LORD himself will give you a sign.”

There doesn't seem to be anything wrong with what Ahaz says here. After all, God did tell his people not to test him, and Ahaz appears to be worried that if he asks for a sign from God he will be doing just that. But God has said, more or less, “Ahaz, you stand in the line of David. All of the promises I made to him, I have made to you. It's different with you. You may ask me for a sign.” Ahaz's refusal to ask for a sign betrays the kind of relationship he has with God. For him, God is a God of rules, not relationship; all law and no grace.

But God will not be denied. If Ahaz will not ask for a sign, God will give him one. And here's where it gets interesting. The above passage is from Isaiah 7:10-13. Isaiah goes on to declare: “Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.” For us, this promise was fulfilled when God became man in Jesus of Nazareth. It is a promise of forgiveness, life and salvation! But listen to what this “sign” was for Ahaz: “In that day every place where there used to be a thousand vines, worth a thousand shekels of silver, will become briars and thorns. With bow and arrows a man will come there, for all the land will be briars and thorns.” For Ahaz, the promise of “Immanuel,” or “God with us” ends in the devastation of the land and victory of Judah's enemies. “Immanuel” was a threat. God's people had been worshipping other gods, ignoring their neighbors, and were practicing all kinds of evil.

For us, “Immanuel” means eternal victory over God's enemies and a life in Eden Restored. For those of us who know the love of God in Jesus Christ, “Immanuel” is the promise that will take us through this life, protect us in death, and guarantees us a blessed life in the New Heavens and the New Earth.

This Advent Season, we are going to have worship services on Wednesday evening, starting at 7:00, where we will listen to the Christmas Story from the Gospel According to Matthew, Luke and John. We will hear what it means that our “Immanuel” has come! Please join us for worship. And because we know that it is sometimes difficult to get everyone together after a long day, fed and out the door in time for church, let us do the cooking for you! We will be offering a free Advent Dinner before every service, starting at 6:00. We hope to see YOU at Zion for worship on Wednesday!



Inside this issue:

Midweek Service of Prayer	Pg 2
Christmas Caroling	Pg 2
Sunday School News	Pg 3
December Birthdays	Pg 3
Confirmation Retreat	Pg 4
Chairman's Report	Pg 4
Dec./Jan. Participants	Pg 5
E-3 Pittsburgh	Pg 6
Stephen Ministry Corner	Pg 6
Sunday School Missions Projects	Pg 7
Notes from the Preschool	Pg 8
Volunteer Needed	Pg 8
Hi, Welcome to Zion/New Member/ Merry Christmas!	Pg 9
Announcements	Pg 10



Advent Services:
Wednesday, December 4, 11, 18
Dinner @ 6:00 pm
Service @ 7:00 pm

Christmas Program:
Sunday, December 15
Dinner @ 5:30 pm
Program @ 7:00 pm

Christmas Eve Service:
Tuesday, December 24
Service @ 7:00 pm

Christmas Day Service:
Wednesday, December 25
Service @ 10:00 am

New Year's Eve Service:
Tuesday, December 31
Service @ 7:00 pm

Midweek Service of Prayer and Preaching

I had to work.

The kids had this thing.

We were out of town.

I slept in.

I was sick.

Whatever your excuse, sometimes you just can't (or don't) make it to church on Sunday. That's too bad. We'd like to see you here on Sunday. But if you can't make it on Sunday, please consider coming on Wednesday. In fact, even if you do make it on Sunday, please consider coming on Wednesday. Why? Because starting on January 8th, we are going to be offering a midweek service of Prayer and Preaching at Zion. Shorter, simpler, and more casual than Sunday morning, this service will be a blessing to you and your family. The service starts at

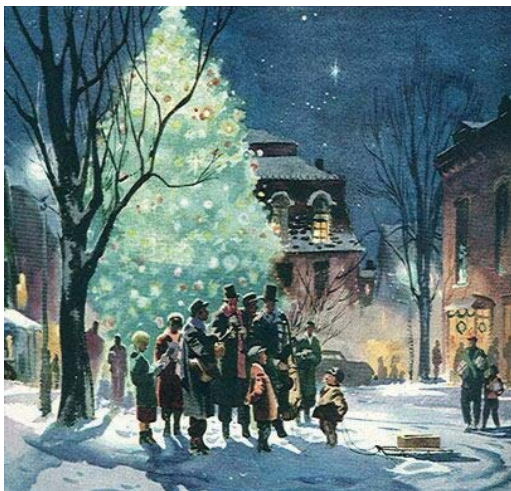
7:00pm and will last between thirty and thirty-five minutes.



Christmas Caroling

Do you like to sing? Do you enjoy cookies and hot chocolate? Do you want to spread Christmas cheer to the members of Zion?

Then please join us as we go Christmas caroling to our shut-ins. We will be caroling on Sunday December 22nd from 5-7pm. We will meet in the church basement for hot chocolate and Christmas goodies beforehand. This is a great way to share a taste of Christmas with our shut-ins who will not be able to attend Christmas services.



SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS!

Something's Fishy at Zion!

What could it be?

Zion's Sunday school children want to tell you!

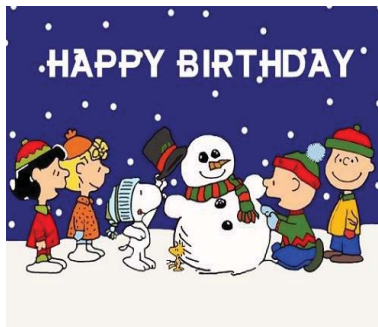


Please join us for Zion's Christmas dinner and Sunday school program entitled, "Something's Fishy". Join Zion members as we fellowship together during dinner, learn about the ICHTHUS, sing Christmas carols, and end the evening with yummy desserts!

Sunday, December 15

Dinner 5:30pm

Program 7:00pm



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- | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Laurie Eckles | 12. Paul Green | 27. Kay Case |
| 2. John Coyle | 12. Michael Oechslein | 27. Rebekah Quinlan |
| 2. Abigale Morgan | 13. Opal Miller | 28. Allyson Morgan |
| 2. Sharon Oechslein | 13. Susan Stone | 29. Kathleen Derosa |
| 3. William Bishop | 17. John Gresh | 29. Leah Luedeman |
| 3. Linda Seibel | 17. Alyssa Schroeder | 29. Riese Smidt |
| 5. Benjamin Ackerman | 18. Bob Spotti | 30. Jordan James |
| 5. Jim Goodge | 23. Adam Elikor | |
| 5. Dick Wible | 23. Megan Pasquini | |
| 10. Michael Kozak | 24. Jeremy Dyczewski | |
| 11. Heather Nicodemus | 24. Michael Dyczewski | |

CONFIRMATION RETREAT

From November 15-17th our eight Confirmation Students and nine Chaperones headed to Camp Jumonville for a weekend of study, prayer, play and worship. Vicar David and Pastor Duncan taught six lessons on the New Testament: the birth and baptism of Jesus, the Temptation of Jesus and the Sermon on the Mount, the Miracles of Jesus and his End-Time Sermon, the Passion and Resurrection of Jesus, the Book of Revelation and the End of the Age, and the Book of Acts. We also went on a couple of short hikes, played tennis, street hockey and kickball. We even had a bonfire and learned the time-honored game of "Silent Football."

Thank you all for your prayers and support!

Our next Confirmation Module is coming up at the end of February.

Contact Pastor Duncan or Vicar David if you would like to help out.

A special THANK YOU to our chaperones: Simon, Dick, Steve, Brian, Sandra, Molly and Stephanie! Also, THANK YOU to Neil Ackerman who helps with memory work on a weekly basis in Sunday School.



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Church, Mission & Synod (CMS) & Plate Finances

October Income	\$34,994.00
October Expenses	<u>48,843.00</u>
Unfavorable to Income	(\$13,849.00)

The unfavorable result was mainly caused by transferring two months of funds from the General account into the Kingdom and Trustee funds.

As of December 2013, we are estimating \$10,713.00 cash on hand. All bills through November have been paid.

Continue to pray for Zion that we are able to grow our community outreach ministry, support local charities and Christian education for youth and adults. May God guide us in using these gifts and our talents this coming year.

Bob Schmidt
Chairman

SERVICE PARTICIPANTS

DECEMBER

DATE	TIME	GREETERS	ACOLYTES
December 1	8:00 AM 10:30 AM	David & Mary Hutula Michael & Deborah Sterba	Josiah Ackerman
December 4 Advent	7:00 PM		Elder
December 8	8:00 AM 10:30 AM	Gene & Sharon Koop Rob Oelschlager	Grant Geregach Lara Luedeman
December 11 Advent	7:00 PM		Elder
December 15	8:00 AM 10:30 AM	Shane & Sandy Bryant David & Penny Miller & Family	Augie Bishop Jennifer Fitzgerald
December 18 Advent	7:00 PM		Elder
December 22	8:00 AM 10:30 AM	George, Jane & Michael Kozak Bob & Nancy Spotti	Christopher Yellig Sydney Harris
December 24 Christmas Eve	7:00 PM	John & Katie Gielarowski & Family	Jennifer Fitzgerald Grant Geregach Crucifer: Joe Gierelowski
December 25 Christmas Day	10:00 AM	Dick & Carolyn Wible	Augie Bishop Chris Yellig Crucifer: Bill Bishop
December 29	8:00 AM 10:30 AM	Peter & Barbara Fisher Rose Steranko	Josiah Ackerman Augie Bishop
December 31 New Years Eve	7:00 PM	Clara Hayes	Elder
January 5	8:00 AM 10:30 AM	Joan Kovach Chuck & Debra LaJeunesse	Chris Yellig Lara Luedeman
January 12	8:00 AM 10:30 AM	Wayne & Barb Oechslein Jim & Marylou Neill	Grant Geregach Jennifer Fitzgerald

ELDERS	Frank Vallelunga, Ken Wuerthele
ALTAR GUILD	Janet Oelschlager, Marian Oelschlager, Molly Oelschlager
USHERS @ 8:00 am	Carl Bauer, Gene Koop, Ron Meier, Jack Oelschlager
USHERS @ 10:30 am	Neil Ackerman, Ross Chilcott, Kari Gresh, John Gresh

JANUARY

ELDERS	
ALTAR GUILD	Elsie DallaPiazza Mary Hutula
USHERS @ 8:00 am	
USHERS @ 10:30 am	

If you are unable to participate on the assigned date, please find your own substitute and notify the church office (412) 221-4776 or secretary@zlc.org of the change.

E3-Pittsburgh

Equip, Energize and Educate.

Zion has received endorsements from the President of the Eastern District of the LC-MS and the Pittsburgh Area Lutheran Ministries (PALM) for the outreach and evangelism conference we are planning (with help from your generosity, prayers and the Kingdom Fund). Up next, we are going to speak with the leadership boards of local Lutheran congregations to gain their support and involvement in this very exciting project!

If you would like to be a part of E3-Pittsburgh, please contact Pastor Duncan or John Gielarowski.

Stephen Ministry Corner

We had a very busy November! Our Training Class is now 12.5 hours into their 50 hours of training (and doing very well)! Our current Stephen Ministers have added a Care Receiver and have continued to faithfully meet with the existing Care Receivers. We had Stephen Ministry author Donna Authers give a presentation to the congregation and their friends. We are continuing to explore ways to care for those going through hard times. If you, or someone you know, could benefit from having a Stephen Ministry Care Giver, please contact Pastor Duncan.



All conversations will be kept in the strictest of confidence.

Sunday School Mission Projects

Sunday school Missions

For the past 2 years, Zion's Sunday school children have dedicated their time and talents in the month of February toward mission outreach. Their outreach includes:

- A visit to Country Meadows, reaching out with God's word through Christmas songs;
- Homemade cards for Zion's shut-in's and members who are ill;
- Gift bags filled with homemade crafts, brownies and cards donated for Food Bank;
- Donation, collection and distribution of items for our troops and their families;
- Sharing the message of God's love through song during a church service.

For 2014, the Sunday school has chosen to continue support for our troops and their families through the non-profit organization called Operation: Stars and Stripes. We have also chosen to "spruce up" the welcome packets given to those who visit Zion.

Operation: Stars and Stripes

We hear the good news that many of our troops are slated to come home next year. Praise God! But, when that happens, many places where the troops shop for personal items and food will close down. Those who must stay behind will no longer have somewhere to shop or the distance to get to those places is far too long. Our troops will need our donations more than ever!

What our troops desperately desire are snack items and words of encouragement from us. So, our mission will be to collect specific snack items, putting them into bags, adding God's love with letters and cards, and shipping them off....**Operation: Bags of Love!**

Here is how you can help:

Zion congregation and/or visitors:

- Granola/energy bars
- Gallon-sized and quart-sized Ziplok bags

Sunday school and confirmation kids and youth group:

- Chewing Gum
- Drink mix singles (Gatorade & Propel are favorites)

Zion Day school children and families:

- Snack sized packages of cookies
- Snack sized packages of crackers
- Cereal cups

Everyone:

- Write a letter of encouragement to a soldier. Must be written on provided letterhead.
- Draw a picture on our Operation: Bags of Love drawing page.
- Pray for our troops.

(Letterhead and drawing pages are available in the Narthex, school lobby and on the Sunday school tab at www.zlcb.org.)



Some things to consider:

- Make sure to mark items "OSS Donation".
- Check expiration dates. We will not be shipping the items until the end of February, so make sure that expiration dates extend well beyond then.
- Ziplok bags are important because items packed are secure and won't contaminate other packages if they leak. Also, soldiers can reuse the bags to protect items, such as electronics, from sand or the weather.
- Check out www.operationstarsandstripes.org for other donation ideas.

Zion Welcome Packets

When a visitor comes through Zion's doors, they receive a welcome packet that contains information about what Zion members believe, things we do at Zion and a post card to offer/request additional information. The Sunday school would like to enhance the welcome packet by adding a few additional items. Some ideas include: a welcome card from the Sunday school, a pen, Divine chocolate square, Bible verse book mark, and a bag to put it all in.

All Sunday school offerings in the month of January will be used towards the purchase of items for the welcome packets. The new Welcome Packets will be put together in the month of February. If you would like to make a monetary donation, please make sure you designate it for "Welcome Packets".

"Let us love one another....for God is love. 1 John 4: 7-8

NOTES FROM THE PRESCHOOL

Greetings from the Preschool! We hope everyone had a blessed Thanksgiving. We have been busy little Pilgrims and Indians. As we usually do in November, we asked the children to bring in food items for the Bridgeville food bank. We explained that the food bank is where people who don't have enough money to buy food can go and get food. Wow....the children were certainly up to the challenge. We were able to send bags and bags of food to help those less fortunate. It made the children feel good to know that they were helping little children and their families. Children truly are amazing in their capacity to understand real topics when presented in a way that relates to them.

The Spaghetti Dinner and Art Show was a huge success again this year. We served over 368 people...a school record! If we keep growing, we may have to start setting up heated tents outside to handle all of the people...it's a great problem to have. Thank you to all who helped make this event possible. We could not do it without you. Money from this fundraiser will help fund the new reception area in the school lobby. Look for some exciting changes in that area in January.

December will be filled with lots of fun Christmas activities. In addition to our Christmas parties, kids praise, Chapel, Lunch Bunch Moms Morning Out and our Christmas programs, we will host two "Shopping days". This is a time when parents can leave their children at school until 2:00 (with pizza, games and a movie, I might add) while their moms and dads have some shopping time "kid free". I'm sure it doesn't come as a surprise that this is very popular! The best part is that the kids love to stay at school longer with their wonderful teachers.

Our Christmas program will be on two days again this year due to the number of students and their families who attend. We would love for you to come and enjoy a night of beautiful Christmas music sung by our preschool children. What a joy it is to hear the good news of Christ's birth through the voices of these little children. The program dates are Monday December 9th and Thursday December 12th. Hope to see you there.



Blessings,
Tracey Harris
Director

VOLUNTEER NEEDED

We are looking for someone to write articles for the Pittsburgh Lutheran newsletter. The articles would focus on various monthly activities (i.e., Mission Trips, Oktoberfest, Chili Cook Off, Spaghetti Dinner, etc.) These articles are an outstanding way to let community know what is happening at Zion.

Please let Pastor or myself know if you would be interested.

Bob Schmidt
Chairman



“Hi, welcome to Zion!”

Between Christmas and New Year’s, we are going to be adding a work station for our secretary (and Zion member) Julie Huse in the lobby of the preschool. This will allow for her to interact with the preschool families on a daily basis, add an additional layer of security for the preschool, open up office space for Pastor Duncan, and add to the overall daily ministry of the church and the school.

Thanks to Brian Pasquini, Julie Huse, and Tracey Harris for their work on this project. Also, thanks to the Church Council, the Board of Education and your generosity for funding this endeavor!

NEW MEMBER!

Zion Lutheran Church welcomes its newest member, Debbie Ford! We pray that your time at Zion will be a blessing for you. We look forward to growing in our faith and witness with you!



Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

I would like to take this opportunity on behalf of the Church Council to wish everyone a Blessed Merry Christmas and Peaceful New Year!

Bob Schmidt
Chairman



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Monday Night Football



Join us at Bubba's Monday nights at 8:00pm to watch the game, check our Fantasy Football Scores, and enjoy an evening of fellowship.

Collection for this month's Bridgeville area food bank is Sunday, December 15. The "item of the month" is Hot Drinks. You are also welcome to help at the food bank every third Saturday of the month between 7:45 and 12:00 at Bethany Presbyterian



FOOD BANK

FOOD BANK

Bowling

Week 8: Friday, December 13
Week 9: Friday, December 27

All games are played at
6:30pm at
AMF Mt. Lebanon Lanes

