



CHURCH KEY

A NEWSLETTER THAT OPENS PEOPLE
TO THE MINISTRIES OF



ZION'S UNION
CHURCH MAXATAWNY

**329 Church Road
Kutztown, Pennsylvania
610-683-7485**

a Federated Church of
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
and
The United Church of Christ

**December
2024**

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REMINDERS

- ◆ The cost for a vase of flowers is \$20.00 and the cost to be a bulletin sponsor is \$10.00. Payment may be given to Karen Warmkessel or Tara Berger or put the money in an envelope with your name, date, and what you are paying for and place in the offering plate.
- ◆ Any checks written out for the offering, altar flowers, or bulletins should be made payable to **Zion's Union Church Maxatawny**.
- ◆ **Any checks for the cemetery should be made out to Maxatawny Zion Cemetery Company, Inc., not to the church.**
- ◆ Let the church office know if you have been admitted to the hospital. The hospitals **DO NOT** notify the church if members have been hospitalized.
- ◆ Zion's Union Church Maxatawny's website is www.zionsunion.org. Check out our website.
- ◆ Zion's has a prayer chain. If you would like to add a name to the Prayer Chain call Mary Laub at 610-248-2801.
- ◆ Sports cleats are not allowed in the church.
- ◆ Refreshments should be kept on the first floor of the church.

PASTOR'S CORNER



O Come, O Come Emmanuel – This traditional hymn, translated by J.M. Neale in 1851 and sung during Advent and through the Christmas Seasons, invites God into all aspects of life while reminding us to *Rejoice!* Stepping into the time of expectant waiting and preparing for the celebration of the birth of Jesus, we also remember the promise of Christ's return at the Second Coming. The scriptures we will engage in this season include the ups and downs of life among those who will bring us the joy of the Nativity.

Many will choose to fill their days with Hallmark movies, Christmas decorations, and music for various reasons. This season of waiting and preparing is filled with joy that ushers us into a new calendar year. The start of Advent also signifies the beginning of the church calendar year.

No matter where this time of the year finds you in your personal life, remember that you are not alone. There is a place for you to share your thoughts, tears, cheers, and times of lament at Zion's. From the Advent Social that will lead us in laughter and meaningful fun to a new Blue Christmas service that will give space to those who need to let go and let God; we will support one another together. Then, be present for our youth as they share the Christmas story in worship! God is with us even now and has blessed us with a loving and faithful community. Walking together into a new calendar year and Christmas celebration, we wait and prepare for Jesus to come to us again.

O come, O King of nations,
bind in one the hearts of all humankind.
Bid all our sad divisions cease and be yourself, our King of Peace.
Come, Lord Jesus Come.

In Christ's love,
Pastor Melissa

INCLEMENT WEATHER



Worship service/Sunday School/activities cancellation:
www.wfmz.com (click on "storm center update") (**please note:**
worship delays or closings will be listed on WFMZ website and not
on Channel 69 except for extreme weekend weather conditions) or call the
church office (610-683-7485). A message will be on the answering machine.

SPECIAL SUNDAYS IN DECEMBER:

- **December 1** – Youth Choir practice at 8:45 A.M.
- **December 1** – Advent Social at 5:00 P.M. Dinner at 6:15 P.M.
- **December 8** – Youth Choir practice at 8:45 A.M.
- **December 8** – Ada Fegely baptism.
- **December 8** – Annual Meeting after the service.
- **December 8** – Blue Christmas service at 3:00 P.M.
- **December 15** – Youth Choir practice at 8:45 A.M.
- **December 15** – Sunday School Christmas Pageant during the service.
- **December 22** – Youth Choir practice at 8:45 A.M.
December 22 – Christmas Fund Offering.
- **December 29** – Youth Choir practice at 8:45 A.M.
- **December 29** – Lessons and Carols.

DECEMBER AND JANUARY WORSHIP

December 1	1 st Advent Communion	SS 9:00	church 10:15
December 8	2 nd Sunday of Advent/Baptism	SS 9:00	church 10:15
December 8	Blue Christmas Service		3:00 P.M.
December 15	3 rd Advent/SS Pageant	SS 9:00	church 10:15
December 22	4 th Sunday of Advent	SS 9:00	church 10:15
December 24	Children Friendly Christmas Service	HC	6:00 P.M.
December 24	Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	HC	9:00 P.M.
December 29	Lessons and Carols	SS 9:00	church 10:15
January 5	Epiphany Sunday	SS 9:00	church 10:15
January 12	Baptism of Our Lord/Install.	SS 9:00	church 10:15
January 19	2 nd Sunday in Epiphany	SS 9:00	church 10:15
January 26	3 rd Sunday in Epiphany	SS 9:00	church 10:15

ACOLYTES, READERS, USHERS, GREETERS, SHEPHERDS

Schedules for acolytes, readers, ushers, greeters, and shepherds are on the upstairs bulletin board. A schedule is also included in each newsletter.

SERVICE VIDEOS

A video recording of our worship service will be uploaded to our church website (zionsunion.org) by early Sunday afternoon and can be viewed for the rest of the week. Prior services can be viewed on Youtube — type “Zion’s Union Church” into the Youtube search bar.

ADOPT-A-HIGHWAY

Thank you to our Adopt-A-Highway volunteers that picked up trash along 222 on Saturday, October 19th. The participants were Greg Haas, Lisa Krause, Sherie Mohn, LaRee Fegely, Harry Snyder, Jake Fegely, and Kevin Fegely. They picked up 14 bags of trash and assorted debris, front bumper, steel, truck tire treads, mud flaps, boogie board. Special thanks to Pennsylvania State Police for the traffic assistance.



FLOWER/BULLETIN

The new book for 2025 is now available in the Gathering Area. Sign up for those special dates. You may also call the church to sign up or leave a message on the answering machine. The price to sponsor Altar Flowers will be \$20.00 per vase (\$40.00 for both vases.) The price to sponsor bulletins will be \$10.00 (\$20.00 to sponsor both.)



INGATHERING

On the first Sunday of each month the Mission Outreach Committee will continue to collect items to fill backpacks with food staples for needy children and their families in the area. Please participate by dropping off non-perishable items from the list below in the container provided in the Gathering Area.



single serve size macaroni and cheese	peanut butter	fruit cups
single serve size applesauce	canned tuna	canned soup
single serve cereal	granola bars	fruit snacks
oatmeal packets		

BETHANY'S BRIGHTER FUTURE FUND

On **November 24th** and **December 1st** baskets will be in the back of the church and the Gathering Area of the church for any monetary donations for the Bethany Children's Home Brighter Future Fund to purchase items for the residents for Christmas.



ADVENT SOCIAL



Please join us for our annual Advent Social on **December 1st**. The meal will be served by the Youth Group at 6:15 P.M. with a program starting at 7:00 P.M. The program will be presented by the Youth Members and WIZ Ladies. It's a fun evening. **There is a sign-up sheet on the church bulletin board if you're planning to enjoy the meal with us. All ages are welcome.** Youth members should plan to be at the church no later than 4:30 P.M.

ANGEL TREE PROJECT

The Sunday School is again having their Angel Tree Project. A table is in the Gathering Area where you may take a name and buy a gift for that person. **Please remember to sign which Angel Tree card you took. Gifts are to be returned unwrapped, but can be placed in a box or gift bag. Gifts are due back by December 8th.**



CARD MINISTRY

**NEW THIS YEAR: CHRISTMAS CARDS
BUY ONE GET ONE (BOGO) FREE.**

Christmas cards are in the box in the gathering area. Here's how BOGO will work. You buy one card and a Christmas stamp for \$1 and you get the second card and stamp free. **WHAT A DEAL!** All you have to do is sign the card and address the envelope. Total cost to you is \$1. Yes, that's right \$1.

CHRISTMAS CARDS AVAILABLE WHILE SUPPLIES LAST.

SIMPLY GIVING PROGRAM

Our “Simply Giving” direct deposit program is available on a monthly or semi-monthly schedule and automatic transfers can be made to Current Expenses or Benevolence. Forms to join this initiative are on the Bulletin Board upstairs. Any new forms or changes for 2025 need to be submitted by mid-December to Peggy Morgan so they can go in effect on January 1st. Enrollment in this program can be done at any time throughout the year.

YOUTH GROUP NUT SALE

Zion's Youth Group is selling 1 lb. bags of Peanuts (salted and unsalted), Cashews, Mixed Nuts, and Dried Fruit.



Orders will be taken after the service on **December 1st and December 8th**. **Pick-up of the nuts will be December 15th and the following Sundays.**

Extra order forms, which are available for any other people who wish to take orders must be turned in by December 8th. Packing of the nuts will be Friday, December 13th at 6:30 P.M. To make things easier, all payments should be made at time of pick-up. Thank you for your continued support.

CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

Our annual Congregational Meeting to elect Board Members and to approve the annual operating budget will be held **December 8th** immediately following the worship service. Please consider attending this important meeting.

The Church Board is in need of 2 persons to fill positions on the Board for 2025 to be nominated on December 8th. See Greg Haas if you are interested.

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

The Sunday School's Christmas Program will be held **December 15th at 10:15 A.M.** during the regular worship service. Please join us to see what Christmas is all about.

Rehearsals for the Christmas Pageant will be held **December 8th and December 15th during the Sunday School hour.**

LIVE NATIVITY



Zion's Outdoor Live Nativity will be held **December 14th** (rain/snow date December 21st). Shows will be held every half hour from 5:00 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. (last show at 7 P.M.). Volunteers are needed (sign-up sheet on the bulletin board): actors (no speaking parts) to reenact the Christmas Story, help with refreshments, parking cars, and setting up and tearing down outdoor structures. Please come out to support this special event as we tell the Christmas story of the birth of Jesus. Please see Sue Haas (610-207-3738) with any questions.

KUTZTOWN COMMUNITY CHOIR CONCERT

The Kutztown Community Choir will present their annual Christmas concert on **Sunday, December 15th** at 3:00 PM, at Trinity Lutheran Church, 357 W. Main St., Kutztown. The musical selections include *This Christmas, Go, Tell It on the Mountain, Nutcracker Jingles, Tundra, and Winter Lullaby*. The concert will once again conclude with the *Hallelujah Chorus*, from Händel's Messiah, in which the audience is invited to join the choir.



The annual Christmas Concert has become a tradition in our town, one that affords the community a time to come together and enjoy the sounds and spirit of the holiday season. The performance is free--there will be a free-will offering to help support the choir. Everyone is invited to join the choir for a reception of Christmas cookies and beverages following the performance.

CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP 2024

Child Friendly Service at 6:00 P.M. – This early service to celebrate the birth of Jesus will have a specific focus for families and children. The story of Jesus birth will be shared and Holy Communion will add to the joy of this wondrous celebration.



Traditional Candlelight Service of Communion at 9:00 P.M. – This traditional Christmas Eve worship will include the singing of familiar carols, the retelling of the story of our Lord's birth, the distribution of Holy Communion, and will end with all in attendance sharing a candlelight celebration of praise to our Lord and Savior Jesus.



MEMBERSHIP DIRECTORIES

The updated Membership Directory is available in the Gathering Area. Pick one up for yourself, family, or others that may not come to worship services. They may also be picked up at the church during the week.

INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

The installation of new board members and officers for 2025, Sunday School teachers and officers, and committees and group officers and leaders will be **January 12th** during the worship service.

MORE FROM OUR PASTOR

Can you believe it! We have been together for almost a year!

As we have journeyed together over these nine months, we're not just exploring new ways of ministry. We're doing it as a united community, holding onto the sacred, deeply important elements that this community has created, honoring our heritage and who we are as one body in Christ.

There are seasonal times like the summer when different ways of worship are experienced and other times when tradition is essential and we are going into one of those seasons. Yes, things have changed, though no changes are made just for the sake of change. What God and you have called me to provide is and will be aligned with Jesus' teachings. There will be times when we agree on the ministry and opportunities that I present, and we will celebrate that. There will be times when you disagree with what I say or do. To borrow a phrase from my colleague, Rev. Timmons, that is natural (and good) when we humans dare to be open (and loving) in our communications.

Please talk with me about changes you see and those you would like to see. I highly encourage you to speak to me directly, as talking together will help me hear what enables you to maintain and grow your relationship with God. I value your input and am available during office hours for you to drop in. However, making an appointment would ensure uninterrupted time!

In this season of giving, I also share a gentle reminder that I will never email you to solicit gift cards or money to help me out of a crisis. Please always check the email address before responding or call me for verification.

God bless you,
Pastor Melissa

MUTUAL MINISTRY

The Mutual Ministry Committee's purpose is to cultivate and maintain effective relationships between the pastor and members of the congregation. We act as the liaison between the Church Board, the pastor, and the congregation.

When a member expresses a concern about another member or something that is occurring in our congregation, our committee meets to seek ways to solve the problem. Our focus is always on the congregation's ministry and how it may be carried out effectively for the sake of the church.

We also serve as a sounding board for the pastor to share personal problems being faced by members and to help her to determine how best to accomplish what is being proposed.

Finally, we serve as a "focus group", representative of the congregation, as church leaders to share ideas for ministry and seek to access how best to accomplish what is being proposed.

If you have questions, concerns, or comments about aspects of the congregation's ministry, please contact any of the members of this committee: Traci Gehringer, Greg Haas, Lori Arndt, Tim Haas, and Melissa DeLong.

YOUTH GROUP NEWS

***Youth Group updates are announced during the Sunday School opening and posted in the bulletin**

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| December 1 | Youth be at church by 4:30 P.M.
Dinner at 6:15 P.M.
Advent Social at 7:00 P.M. |
| December 1 & 8 | Nut Sale. |
| December 13 | Pack nuts at 6:30 P.M. |
| December 15 -? | Nuts will be available. |

See more detailed information on pages 5 and 6 of this newsletter.

PRAYER SHAWL



Comforting wraps are still available to all who are in need. Please alert the church office or Loretta Flicker if you or someone you know would benefit from this ministry.

CHURCH BOARD MEETING

October 29, 2024

- The 2025 proposed budget was approved by the board, we will have our annual meeting on December 8th for the congregational vote.
- There are two board openings for 2025 - One opening is for a 3 year term, the other is to fill the remaining year of a term. If interested see Greg Haas, Tim Haas, or Nancy Fulton.
- The Church office will be getting a new computer and a new to us copier. The copier will come with a maintenance agreement that covers the cost of the drum, toner, parts, and labor.
- The membership directory is complete. Copies are available in the Gathering Area.
- The heating system conversion to propane is complete and all systems are working.

FIRST MONDAY BIBLE STUDY

The Bible Study that was held the first Tuesday of the month is now held the first Monday of the month from 6:30 to 8:00 P.M. This is a wonderful opportunity for personal growth, and as you are comfortable, all are encouraged to share and ask questions as we learn and grow together in God's word!

SNACK AND CHAT

We will have lunch in small groups at restaurants in the area. Our Zion's shirts could identify us and hopefully generate interest in our church. The next outings are **December 11th at Jaks** and **January 8th at 1760 House in Trexlertown**. Notify Nancy Fulton if you are able to attend.

SENIOR FELLOWSHIP GROUP

The Senior Fellowship Group will meet **December 23rd** and **January 27th** at 12 noon. Persons attending should bring a bag lunch. Dessert and beverages will be provided. Games and cards provide entertainment for the afternoon. Guests are always welcome.



PLASTIC BAGS PROJECT

The group will meet **December 4th, and December 18th** from 10:00 A.M. to 12:00 P.M. to weave plastic bags into mats. Contact Tanya Schaedel at 484-705-5533 or Carol Leiby at 484-695-8318. Plastic bags may be brought to church and deposited in the box in the Gathering Area. **ONLY plastic bags that are used at the register when leaving are wanted. We are unable to use produce bags, plastic from cases of water, toilet paper plastic, etc.** If anyone can flatten the bags and cut at home, we will show you how quick the bags can be prepared.

WOMEN IN ZION

*A group of Christian women in service, mission,
and study for the benefit of all.*

December 9 Meeting at 1:00 P.M. Cookie exchange,
Christmas games, ornament exchange.



For more information contact Linda Ballew-Johnson (484-553-1981)

FROM THE MAILBOX

The family of Donald Mertz would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to everyone for the kind words, cards, and prayers during his illness and passing. Your love and support have been a great comfort to us during this difficult time. We would like also to extend a special thank you to Pastor Melissa for her compassionate visits and unwavering support over the past four months. Her care and guidance have been a true blessing to our family.

With sincere appreciation,
Kay, Melissa, & Elizabeth

Dear Friends at Zion's Union Church,

A quick personal note of thanks for your continued generosity. Your Harvest Home donation of \$269.00 will contribute greatly to making our community a healthier, safer place to live.

With gratitude,
Jim Reece
Friend, Inc.

200TH ANNIVERSARY OF ZION'S

In December 2026, we will be celebrating the 200th Anniversary of our church. Committees are being organized to plan this special event. Members who are interested in helping with the plans for the celebration should notify Greg Haas.

REJOICING SPIRITS WORSHIP SERVICE

Rejoicing Spirits of Eastern Berks County service is at 3:00 P.M. the first Sunday of every month at St. Paul's UCC, 47 S. Whiteoak Street, Kutztown. All are welcome at this no-shush worship service that enriches the lives of all people, especially the differently-abled, their caregivers, families, and friends. **Our next service is December 1st.** This will be their Christmas Service. The theme is *I Hear You* and the Presiding Facilitator is Keith Wuchter. Parking is available in the lot behind the church. For more information contact Charlene Fisher at 610-223-9822 or Erin Webb at 610-894-9949.

GROUNDHOG LODGE FOR YOUTH

The Pennsylvania German Zammelaaf organization will sponsor a Grundsau Lodsch fer Yunge (Groundhog Lodge for Youth) on Saturday, **February 1, 2025** from 1:30-3:00 P.M. at the Zion UMC Church of Iona, 1920 South 5th Avenue, Lebanon, PA 17042. This event is perfect for youth ages 5-12 and is free, with donations being accepted. All youth must be accompanied by an adult. Note that this year there will be a special groundhog guest! Safety guidelines will be observed. There is limited availability. For reservations contact pgalice2@gmail.com or 1-717- 933-5511 by **January 18, 2025**.

The snow date is Sunday, February 8, 2025. Check the Facebook page at zammelaaf@gmail.com for more information and updates in case of inclement weather. For more information contact Mary Laub.

ANNUAL REPORTS

As the year comes to an end, so does the time for all organizations, groups, and committees to get their annual report information into the church office. All information for the annual report **MUST** be in the church office by **January 15th**.



MYSTERY VOLUNTEERS

Our Mystery Volunteer for November was Linda Ballew-Johnson.

We were both born in Allentown PA. Growing up she lived in Lehigh Country and he lived in Berks County.

She enjoyed spending time with her grandmother who lived next door and learned about gardening, preserving, and the fine art of avoiding the chickens.

He enjoyed living close to many of his relatives, and his aunt's famous cinnamon toast.

After graduation, she went on to pursue a professional career with a major healthcare organization which she is still with and he joined the Navy, later continuing in his father's footsteps being a small business owner.

Their paths did not cross till several years later. It was a blind date set up with an unlikely mutual friend, which joyfully has resulted in 32 happily married years.

While dating they were surprised to learn how many commonalities that they shared. For example, their grandfathers actually taught in the math and science departments at Northampton High School and were pictured side by side in the high school year book.

Both coming from a long line of Pennsylvania Germans, they share many traditions, including pork & sauerkraut & pigs stomach on New's Year's day.

The majority of their family lives close to them affording them the opportunity to gather for many family functions. They have two children and have been blessed with two grandchildren. Included in the family are two "grand" pups who love to come to visit.

Her hobbies include gardening, with a special affection for flowers, preserving the harvest from her garden, and spending time with her family. They enjoy a 2 mile morning walk each day and he enjoys running; having completed a full and several half marathons.

He also bowled a 300 game.

They are both very active in the church having been a Sunday School teacher, President of the Sunday School, board members, and various other committees.

You normally will find them in the kitchen during special events and doing things for the good of the church.

MYSTERY MEMBER(S)

Our Mystery Member for November was Lara Thomas.

Early Years: As a young boy, he loved playing football and was a fearless tackler. He loved attending State Police Camp for many years, where he excelled as a shooter. Later on, he volunteered for several years at Muscular Dystrophy Camp, as a camp counselor, where his sister attended each year.

In her early years, she played soccer and softball, attended Youth Group events, sang in church and school choirs, and loved performing in school and community theater. She enjoyed time with friends and her close-knit family, often visiting family that also served as her neighbors.

Education: He has an Associate's degree from Pennsylvania School of Art and Design, a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from Millersville University, and a Master's Degree from Grantham University in Information Technology.

She has a Bachelor's degree in Social Work and a minor in Early Childhood Education from Shippensburg University.

Marital Status: They were married on June 9th, 2012 in his father's beautiful backyard.

Employment: He has worked in IT as a project lead for 2 large venue safety and surveillance prevention companies which was work that has taken him all over the country for several years. For the last four years, he has been working as an independent IT field technician which now keeps him closer to home.

She has varied experience in working in behavior therapy, child welfare, and as a counselor in the field of addiction. After ten blessed years of being a stay at home mom, she, two years ago, went back to work in behavior therapy at the elementary school where two of their three children currently attend.

Family: They both come from relatively big families. He has three sisters and she has two brothers. Her family is very active at Zion's church.

Pets: They have one mostly obnoxious dog.

Hobbies: They both enjoy the outdoors and watching sports. He coaches football and wrestling and they both cheer on their children, who participate in several travel sports and youth sports that keep them all very busy and active.

They love their trips to the beach. He is an avid hunter and sports card collector. She enjoys cooking, reading, crafting and running. They share a love of country music which has taken them to numerous concerts of artists that they love to see and enjoy.

Church Involvement: While busy family life often makes it challenging for them to all attend church as a family of five, they absolutely enjoy watching their children participate in Youth Group, Children's choir, the Live Nativity, and Sunday School programs when they are able.

PRAYER REQUESTS

We ask God's blessings upon those who are ill, recovering from surgery, homebound, or have asked for our prayers:

Elaine Heffner, David Herber, Cooper Kellum, Tracey Lutz, Bonnie Haas, Bill & Karen Howard, Irene Isamoyer, Jamey Webb, Liz Jones, Julia Mohn, Owen Shorette, Walter & Doris Dietrich, John & Marlene Costello, Barry & Ann Miller, Marilyn & Bill Bird, Marian Stettler, Gladys Leibold, Donna Slotter, Karen Weaver, Randy Warmkessel, Donna VanDeCar, David Grim, Brooke, John Laird, Bev, Eric, Jenni Juntunen, James Ely, Jamie Albanese, Alexis, Deb P., Beth S., Linda Carter, Sparky Grace, Jim, Chris Pinkerton, Laurel Rudy, Grayson Rudy, Livvy Rudy, Sherry S., Jeremy Crum, Chad, Chris, Laura G., Keith Egley, Leila, Bruce Fritzinger, Sherri Gehringer, Vera, Ian Miller, Rosemary LaFratte, Ely, Paige Sechler, Owen Lamendola, Elia, Joanne Pauley, Sarah Johnson, Chris Szarko, Victoria Slotter, Regen Zimmerman, Karen Ames, Donna Rabert, Tom Seifert, Rayann Roth, Valerie, Lorraine Miller, Christopher Mercardo, Christy Ryan, Michele Rodriquez, Judy Redman, Frank Knight, Mary, Betsy, family of Drew Stump, family of Donald Mertz, family of Margaret Apostolos-Peters.

If anyone can be removed from this list, please notify the church office.

If you know of other persons in need of prayer and you wish to have a name included on the list, notify the church office. If you want a name included on Zion's Prayer Chain call Mary Laub at 610-248-2801.

FROM THE RECORD BOOK

Funerals: *Donald G. Mertz*, 86, of Kutztown, PA, died October 18, 2024.

Visitation and service by Rev. Melissa Burkhart was October 26, 2024 in Zion's Union Church Maxatawny. Interment was in Zion Maxatawny Union Cemetery, Kutztown.

CHURCH HISTORY BOOK

The Church History Book is still available to be purchased. The cost is \$15.00. Call the church office if you would like one. Any checks should be made out to "Zion's Union Church Maxatawny". Put "History Book" on the memo line.



NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

A Call to Serve: Bishop deForest on Living Faithfully in Today's World

"I may be saved for all eternity, just like all of you [in worship this morning]. But I want my first moments in eternity to be surrounded more by people I helped than by people I hurt; by more celebration than condemnation; and by a Jesus more glad at me than mad at me."

This excerpt from Bishop Christopher deForest's sermon, preached during a service at Maiden Creek in Blandon on November 10, captures the heart of his message.

The Gospel lectionary for November 10 was Mark 12:38-44, where Jesus observes people putting money into the temple treasury, noticing a poor widow contributing two small copper coins—all she had to live on. Jesus explains to his disciples that the widow has put in more than all the others, as she gave out of her poverty, while they gave out of their wealth.



Bishop Christopher deForest preaching and worshipping at Maiden Creek, Blandon on Nov 10, 2024

Bishop deForest focused his sermon on Lutheranism, particularly since that Sunday was also Martin Luther's birthday. "Martin Luther himself would likely say that this story from the Gospel of Mark is a great example of the kind of things that got Luther all worked up in the first place," said Bishop deForest. He argued that Jesus would not want us just to "be like the widow" or celebrate "sacrificial giving" or "cheerful givers" as illustrated by the widow. Rather, he pointed out that Jesus was expressing strong anger at a system that ignored the plight of the poor and those harmed by economic inequalities and injustice. Bishop deForest compared Jesus' angry response in the Gospel of Mark to the time when Jesus overturned the tables in the temple.

He also paralleled the recent election with Jesus' reaction to the widow's offering.

"Lots of people voted, in similar anger. They – or someone they love, care about, feel concern for – are being forgotten," he noted. He reminded us that regardless of political affiliations, Christ died and came to save all of us. Quoting John 3:16, he said, "God so loved the world, that God gave God's only son, that everyone who believes in him, may not perish but may have eternal life." He emphasized, "Eternal life. Forever. Which I will spend, with these same folks. On all sides." That includes the widows and the scribes. The elites and the forgotten. The celebrities and the nobodies.



Bishop deForest concluded his sermon with a call to action: "While we're still here, and we can still offer love like Jesus, healing like Jesus, and side-by-side engagement like Jesus – with our friends and enemies, strangers and neighbors – well then, Jesus calls us out, the same as all his disciples – to get to work, while we can."

To read Bishop Christopher deForest's full sermon in his recent "On The Way" blog visit godslove.org/onthewaynov11

Submitted by: Stacey Burke, NEPA Synod Communications & Growing Young Coordinator

Learning Ministries' Day



Sponsored by the NEPS Faith Formation Resource Ministry Team

January 25, 2025
8:30am-3:30pm

Jordan Lutheran Church, Orefield

godslove.org/LMD

"What does it mean to be a Christian in a culture that challenges our faith?"

Registration information available soon

CARD SHOWERS

We are listing those couples married 50 years or more and those people 70 years or older. If we are missing anyone, please call or email the church office.

December 3	John Laird
December 14	Judy Koller
December 16	Diana Gehman
December 16	Victor Berger
December 17	Elaine Silliman
December 17	Jane Warmkessel
December 18	Michael & Evelyn Dietz (59 wed)
December 26	Michael Dietz
January 1	Glenn Bennecoff
January 1	Michael Nowotarski
January 2	Joan Stettler
January 4	Marian Stettler
January 14	Irene Isamoyer
January 17	Walter Dietrich, Jr.
January 22	Kyle Koller
January 30	Elaine Heffner



OUR SYMPATHIES TO...

... the family of Drew Stump.

the family of Donald Mertz.

... the family of Margaret Apostolos-Peters.



MISSION STATEMENT

Energized by the Spirit! Humbled by Christ's Grace! Working for God's glory!

UPCOMING HOLY COMMUNION

You are invited by Jesus Christ to this awesome feast of the Children of God.

December 1	Altar Holy Communion
December 24 (6 PM)	Holy Communion
December 24 (9 PM)	Holy Communion
January 5	Pew Holy Communion



JANUARY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The next issue of the newsletter will come out the beginning of January. If you have any information to be included in the December newsletter, please have it in the church office by **December 13th**.