

THE CHURCH KEY

A NEWSLETTER THAT OPENS PEOPLE
TO THE MINISTRIES OF



Since 1826

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

**January
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REMINDERS

- ◆ The cost for a vase of flowers is \$18.00 and the cost to be a bulletin sponsor is \$8.00. Payment may be given to Jane Warmkessel or put the money in an envelope with your name, date, and what you are paying for and place in the offering plate in the rear of the church. The sign-up book and envelopes are currently in the church office. Contact the church office to access them.
- ◆ 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.**
- ◆ We have DVDs of regular worship services available for use at home. Contact the church office if you would like to borrow one.
- ◆ 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 Marion Angstadt at 610-683-3918.
- ◆ Sports cleats are not allowed in the church.
- ◆ Refreshments should be kept on the first floor of the church.

THE PASTOR'S PAGE



A rare astronomical event is happening this year which astronomers call a “great conjunction” of the planets Jupiter and Saturn. In an extremely rare coincidence, on the winter solstice, December 21st, these two planets will appear the closest to each other in the night sky than they have since 1623. If you haven’t seen them yet, just look low in the southwestern sky right after sunset. They will continue to be visible for a couple weeks after Christmas. If you have binoculars or a telescope you will be in for a real treat!

Since this is happening so close to Christmas, some are calling it the “Christmas star.” Many astronomers believe that it may have been a conjunction of the planets Jupiter and Venus that was the source of the star of Bethlehem that the wise men believed heralded the birth of Christ. According to the Gospel of Matthew, the wise men came searching for Jesus because of the appearance of a bright new star in the sky. They came to Jerusalem asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising and have come to pay him homage” (Matthew 2:2). Astronomers know for a fact that Jupiter and Venus were in close conjunction and could be seen rising as the “bright morning star” in August of the year 3BC. Most biblical scholars believe that is the time when Jesus was born.

The Wise Men believed that this new star was a sign from God of the dawning of a new age on planet earth. And, in fact, the birth of Jesus was the inauguration of a new and brighter age in human history. As Jesus himself proclaimed, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:15). Though recent dire events may make it seem otherwise, we are all blessed to be living in this new messianic age. As a person of faith, I believe that God sends us unmistakable signs when we need them most. And this just may be such a time.

I don’t need to remind you we are currently living through one of the more dire times in any of our memories (unless you are a centenarian who can recall the pandemic of 1918 known as the “Spanish flu”). I am well aware how despondent and hopeless many people are feeling right now, especially if Covid-19 has disrupted your life. It has certainly disrupted our life together as a congregation of God’s people—this year sadly unable to even worship together on Christmas Eve.

I am presently in the process of editing and revising Pastor Willis Heckler’s book on the history of Zion’s Union Church, which he was unable to complete before he died. I thought I almost had it finished when the pandemic hit. Now I must add a last chapter on how the pandemic has interrupted the life

of this congregation—the first time in its almost 200-year history that our church was forced to cancel worship services for an extended period of time. This is a most difficult chapter in our history to write. But I wait to write the final words. For I trust that God will soon give me the final words. I anticipate those closing words will include a note of victory, a glimpse of light at the end of the tunnel. I trust that as spring arrives and the very promising vaccines are widely distributed, that our regular in-person worship will resume and life will begin to get back to normal.

I anticipate there will be much to celebrate as the long, cold nights of winter give way to the warmth and sunshine of spring. As we await that new birth for our landscape, heralded by the blooming of flowers and the arrival of robins, we can now, on the cusp of winter, look to the western sky to see a very rare celestial event: a bright new evening star. As I look at this astounding sight, I cannot help but wonder if God has sent us another sign in the sky as he did 2,000 years ago: a new Christmas star for a new millennium. A sign that new life is ahead. A new epiphany to remind us of His never-ending love and faithfulness. God’s Word assures us that through Jesus Christ, things are looking up!

Merry Christmas and Happy Epiphany!

Pastor Jeff

JANUARY AND FEBRUARY WORSHIP
(tentative)

January 3	Second Christmas/Epiphany	church 10:15
January 10	Baptism of Christ/Installation	church 10:15
January 17	Second Sunday after Epiphany	church 10:15
January 24	Third Sunday after Epiphany	church 10:15
January 31	Fourth Sunday after Epiphany	church 10:15
February 7	Fifth Sunday after Epiphany	church 10:15
February 14	Transfiguration Sunday	church 10:15
February 17	Ash Wednesday Service	7:00 P.M.
February 21	First Sunday in Lent	church 10:15
February 24	Mid-Week Lent	7:30 P.M.
February 28	Second Sunday in Lent	church 10:15

PRAYER REQUESTS

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

Pat Miller, Beatrice Bennecoff, Carolyn Wiltrout, Tracey Lutz, Dave Merkel, Cindy Nowotarski, Marian Stettler, Lisa Walker, Loretta Flicker, Marlene Costello, Barry Miller, Kay Weidner, Bill Howard, Nikki Phillips, Arlene Oswald, Joe Karaisz, Janet Fegely, Anna Bortz, Lucille Zettlemoyer, Gloria Haas, Richard Warmkessel, Steve O'Neil, Ralph & Helen Noll, Mary Kutz, Marilyn & Bill Bird, Lowell Thomas, Richard Derr, Karen Weaver, Sylvia Heckler, Gladys Leibold, Althea Moyer, Donna Slotter, Ed & Donna VanDeCar, Mary Jane Williams, Leora Haas, Elaine Seaman, Mr. & Mrs. Kermit Kemp, Beverly Keller, Brandon Hamm, Karen Ames, Taylor Moyer, Betty Wiltrout, Joyce Kemp, Ian Miller, Tom Seifert, Elia, Victoria Slotter, Donna Rabert, Deb, Lisa Szarko, Arthur Sell, Herbert Noll, Niki Nolte, Jamie Jordan, Christopher Mercardo, Jo Corrado, Rayann Roth, Michele Rodriguez, Sue Zimmerman, Renee Wolfe, Kim Markham, Valerie, Drew & Mary Jane Stump, Caitlin Dickey, Frank Knight, Christy Ryan, Lorraine Miller, Judy Redman, Betty Houck, Mary Fox, Larry Hockman, Mary, Betsy, Gary Deder, Gary Sell, Russell Peden, family of Harold Angstadt.

PLEASE UNDERSTAND THAT SOME OF THE EVENTS IN THIS NEWSLETTER MAY NOT HAPPEN DUE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC.

Because no committees, organizations, or groups are planning to meet in the building, no monthly calendar is included in the newsletter.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

In the event in person worship services should resume, worship service cancellations can be found at 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.



SERVICE VIDEOS

A video recording of our worship service will be uploaded to our church website (zionsunion.org) by early afternoon every Sunday 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.

FLOWER/BULLETIN BOOK

The 2021 Flower and Bulletin sponsor book is now available. Call the church office Fridays to sign up for your special dates in 2021. We will continue to take sign-ups for the Altar Flowers and/or Bulletins even though we are not having in person services. That way we will have sponsors available when the church does resume in person services. Please do not pay for your flowers or bulletins until we are having services again. You will not be responsible for any flowers and/or bulletins that were sponsored while the church is not having in person services. Thank you for your co-operation.



HELP RESTORE OUR “GRAND OLD LADY”

Included in this newsletter and in future giving statements, you will find an “Organ Fund” offering envelope. If you are able, prayerfully consider making a contribution to help pay for the major renovation our historic Möller pipe organ. Purchased by our forefathers in 1928 (during the Great Depression) at a cost of \$6,000 (almost a million dollars today!), this “grand old lady” celebrated her 92nd birthday in May. She has served us faithfully, but is now having “breathing difficulties” caused by the aging of her wood, leather, and electronic parts. Help us give her a much-needed transplant of her worn-out parts so she can continue to help us lift up our voices in worship and praise for the next century.

ANNUAL REPORTS



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

A YEAR-END THANK YOU

As we begin another year we need to stop and say thank you to ALL those who gave of their time, talents, and treasures to insure ministry happened here at Zion's these past 12 months. Thank you to everyone for understanding everything that needed to be put in place because of the pandemic. A special thank you to the Re-opening Task Force and the Church Board for keeping Zion's and its members informed of what Zion's was doing and why they were doing it. Thank you everyone that sponsored the altar flowers and/or bulletins at the last minute when no sponsors had signed up and for those who filled in as security persons, greeters, and ushers when needed.

NEW CHURCH SIGN

The New Church Sign is here! This upgrade allows us to post messages electronically. Our sign has been a source of wonderful messages in the past to many people passing by and we want to continue that service. If you are able and would like to donate toward the cost of the new church sign, please see Peggy Morgan or send a check made out to "Zion's Union Church Maxatawny" (with church sign donation on memo line) to her at 39 S. Church St., Macungie, PA 18062. Total cost of sign – \$46,454.33. Donations - \$43,975.00. Donations still needed - \$2,479.33. Thank you in advance for considering to help fund this project.

SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS

The Sunday School Teachers and Officers met on November 11th to discuss our plans in resuming Sunday School. We are just as excited as everyone to get back into the swing of things, but the health and safety of our members is our main priority. We are currently planning on starting Sunday School for our Nursery through High School members in March. We are looking to meet on the 2nd and 4th Sundays of March and April, then resume meeting every week starting in May. Please keep in mind that this may not happen as we have planned, and we may need to do some more schedule readjustments along the way. Once we get closer to our opening day, an updated 2021 Sunday School calendar will be made available. There will be a need for a teacher in our Nursery class, so please contact Courtney Kellum if this is something that would be of interest to you.

EMAIL ADDRESSES

If you didn't receive the recent email from the church regarding the cancellation of the in person worship services, please email the church office at zionsunion@verizon.net to be put on the email list. We will not give your email addresses out to anyone. They will only be used for worship service cancellations.

INGATHERING

On the first Sunday of each month the Mission Outreach Committee will continue to collect items to fill bags with food staples for needy children and their families. Thanks so much for your continued support of this important community outreach project. **DO NOT DELIVER items to the church. Deliver donations to Cindy O'Neil's home at 250 Church Road, Kutztown.**



single serve size macaroni and cheese
single serve size applesauce
single serve cereal
oatmeal packets

peanut butter
canned tuna
granola bars

fruit cups
canned soup
fruit snacks

BLOOD DRIVES

The Blood Mobile will be at Zion's on **Thursday, February 18th** from 3:30 P.M. to 7:00 P.M. Sign up online at giveapint.org (Group ID: 3303). The remaining 2021 Blood Drive dates are for the third **Thursday of the months, May 20th, August 19th, and November 18th** from 3:30 to 7:00 P.M. Please mark your calendars.



THE LONG-AWAITED COOKBOOK

The Women In Zion cookbook is available to purchase. Cost of the cookbook is \$12.00. Checks should be made out to "Women In Zion". Contact Nancy Fulton at 610-682-6357 if you are interested in purchasing a cookbook.



CHURCH BOARD MEETING

November 24, 2020

- The annual report by the committees may not be very involved due to the COVID pandemic. However, committees should still report their activities.
- Jennifer Weidman will join the Student Loan Committee with Grace Haas and Nancy Fulton.
- The Board Reorganization meeting in January will be a regular board meeting on January 5th at 6:30 P.M. It was decided to forego the traditional Saturday reorganizational meeting.
- WIZ cookbooks are for sale. 70 cookbooks have been sold so far.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Ashley DeLong made distinguished honor roll for the first quarter at Brandywine Heights High School.
- Elizabeth Hassler discussed Tax Tips for businesses in a recent article in the *Reading Eagle*.
- Jewel Karaisz, Leo Club President at Kutztown High School, was pictured in the *Northern Berks Patriot Item* with Leo Club members helping at Friend, Inc. to distribute Thanksgiving meals.
- Carson Sheetz made the Berks County Football Coaches Association All-Academic Team.
- Ryan and Amy Parsons and their children, Max, Parke, and Sadie, put a Letters to Santa mailbox in their yard to help Santa with the mountains of letters he receives the time of year.

GROUNDHOG DAY FOR YOUTH

There will be a special VIRTUAL event to celebrate Groundhog Day. The Pennsylvania German Zammelaaf organization will sponsor a Grundsays Daag fer Yunge (Groundhog Day for Youth) utilizing their Facebook page for the virtual celebration! Games, Crafts, Activity Sheets, and a video about Groundhog Day can be downloaded from the PA German Zammelaaf Facebook page beginning on January 31, 2021. This is the second annual Groundhog Day celebration. Due to COVID concerns, an in-person event is not possible. For more information, contact Mary Laub at jmlaub@aol.com or 610-248-2801.

FROM THE MAILBOX

Dear Friends at Zion's Union Church,

It is with grateful hearts that we thank you for your gift of \$265.00 to Friend, Inc. Community Services from Harvest Home. Your willingness to share your blessings with hurting families and individuals in our community helps them weather the crises in their lives.

Gratefully,
Sandra Wise, Executive Director



Dear Zion's Union Church Maxatawny,

The Salvation Army Hamburg Service Center would like to express our sincere appreciation for your recent donation of \$4,462.00. It will help us to provide emergency services and programs to those living in our Northern Berks Communities. Again, thank you for your generous contributions and your continued support of The Salvation Army Hamburg Service Center.

Blessings,
Cathy Correll, Office
Coordinator & Caseworker

WOMEN IN ZION

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

NO MEETINGS UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

*For more information contact Linda Ballew-Johnson
(484-553-1981) or Loretta Flicker (610-683-3627).*



SCRABBLE

Scrabble has been cancelled until further notice.

PRAYER SHAWL



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

CANCER SUPPORT GROUP

The Cancer Support Group **WILL NOT MEET** until further notice.

SENIOR FELLOWSHIP GROUP

There are no plans for the Senior Fellowship Group to meet.

BILINGUAL PA GERMAN AND ENGLISH BOOK PUBLISHED:

Mary Laub published another bilingual book, *Uff der Bauerei: Der Bsuch* (On the Farm: The Visit) which is the 4th in the Uff der Bauerei series. This story continues with Henny, die Katz (the cat) and Spunky, der Hund (the dog). In this story, children visit on the farm and create challenges. What happens? Find out how Henny and Spunky help. And Spunky's favorite dog biscuit recipe is even included in the book! To facilitate learning the Pennsylvania German language, Book 4 has an expanded Glossary with page numbers to easily locate words within the story. Like in previous books, the story is written in PA German with a phonetic spelling and an English translation underneath. An illustration matches the text and there is an audio recording of the story which can be downloaded for free or a CD can be purchased separately. Books can be purchased locally at Dietrich's Meats (they also sell the CDs), Leid's Saddlery, Wooden Bridge Dry Goods, and Burkholder's Farm Market on Topton Road. Books and CDs can be purchased online at Amazon.com and Masthof.com or from Mary. Books are \$10 and CDs are \$5. You can contact Mary at 610-248-2801 or jmlaub@aol.com.

PRAYERS AND CARDS

Cindy and Mike Nowotarski were very active members of our congregation for many years until they moved to St. John in the Virgin Islands for several years. Upon their return to the US, they began traveling around the country in their motor home. Cindy was hospitalized in Denver in the summer and diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. They are now living near Hershey Medical Center and their daughter Melissa and her husband. Prayers and cards are appreciated. Their address is 1865 Gramercy Pl., Hummelstown, PA 17036.

A NEW LENS FOR GENEROSITY

Sharing God's gifts with one another through stewardship is an integral part of the Lutheran faith. But sometimes stewardship is misunderstood, equated simply with giving money rather than sharing time, spirit and love. **Linda Staats is trying to change that with the Generosity Project, a stewardship resource funded in part by Mission Support.**

Developed through a partnership between Staats, the Rocky Mountain Synod and the churchwide organization, the Generosity Project challenges Lutherans to rethink stewardship through innovative, intergenerational programming.

When Diane Krauszer, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Palmer, Alaska, introduced her congregation to the Generosity Project two years ago, it shifted perspectives.

"One [person] exclaimed, 'We never talked about any of this when I was a kid, and I wish we had,'" Krauszer said. Believing this resource could benefit neighbors at Epiphany Lutheran Episcopal Church, Valdez, Alaska, she took a cue from the project and shared it with them.

In 2019, Krauszer partnered with Kaitlin Pabo-Eulberg, Epiphany's pastor, to introduce the blended Lutheran-Episcopal congregation and a neighboring Catholic church to the Generosity Project.

"It [was] a very natural partnership to invite them," Pabo-Eulberg said of Epiphany's

Catholic neighbors. "They were really excited to talk about giving from their perspective."

The event included participants ranging in age from 8 to 89, and Pabo-Eulberg recalled enthusiastic listening and understanding across the generations.

"WE NEVER TALKED ABOUT ANY OF THIS WHEN I WAS A KID, AND I WISH WE HAD."

Among them were Epiphany members Donna Newcomer, a baby boomer, and Steve Newcomer, of the Greatest Generation. "[Now] every time somebody comes to [our] house, when they leave, I say, 'Thank you for spending time with us,'" Donna said. "Because that's the greatest thing you can give somebody — they noticed you and spent time with you."

Staats said this new lens for generosity is the project's aim.

"The goal is not to increase giving by a percentage," she said. "The goal is to change the culture in a congregation [and in homes]. We're building a culture to bring all generations together ... and equipping the home as a place where generosity is practiced."

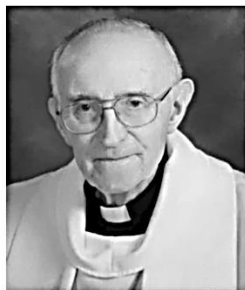
SYNOD NEWS

Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

A Note from the Bishop Elect

Dear Friends in Christ - The Seasons of Christmas and Epiphany proclaim the good news: "Christ with us" and "Christ revealed to us!" I cling to these words. I long to hold tight, loved ones who must stay apart for a time: my parents, siblings, nephews and nieces. And I grieve for those we have lost, cry out for an end to this present suffering. But I also hear this great promise with new ears and insights: "The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in deep darkness a light has dawned" (Isaiah 9:2 NIV). Let us trust that the Light of the World is here already, and yet his coming is on the cusp, ready to start making all things new. In the coming days, I so look forward to sharing the vision that God is ready to reveal, for new life and renewed purpose across our Synod. More to come: keep watch! - Chris deForest, Bishop Elect

The Rev. Richard H. Stough Honored for Navy Chaplaincy



The Rev. Richard H. Stough was recently recognized for 30 years of service as a U.S. Navy Chaplain with a \$1,000 contribution to the ELCA Federal Chaplaincy Ministry Fund for Leaders Scholarship Endowment Fund in honor of his service. The Endowment supports word and sacrament ministry candidates who will minister to military service members, and those who will serve as Veteran's Administration Chaplains or as Federal Prison Chaplains.

Because of its role in lifting up the Endowment Fund, this synod is designated an "ELCA Medallion Synod." Congregations can become "ELCA Medallion Congregations" by similarly supporting the Endowment Fund. Contact the synod office for more information.

Learning Ministries Day 2021 - Registration Deadline is Jan. 15

On Saturday, January 23, Learning Ministries Day will be held via Zoom for the first time ever; and you are invited! We will offer three one-hour workshop sessions with over 15 workshop options total. Our keynote speaker will be Barbara Rossing, professor of New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, where she has taught since 1994. She will be speaking on "Journeys through Revelation: Apocalyptic Hope for Today."

A \$25 fee will be charged for each participant which will include the keynote, three workshops of their choice, and a goodie bag mailed directly to their home. Online registration will be open until the end of the day on January 15, 2021. Checks must be received to the Synod Office no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday, January 15. Workshop descriptions and the registration link can be found on the synod website at godslove.org.

Hope, Reading Receives NAACP Community Impact Award



Food distribution staff at Hope

On Saturday, November 14, the Reading Chapter of the NAACP met for its 33rd annual Freedom Fund Gala - virtually, of course. Meals from "Grill Then Chill" were delivered to the homes of attendees. Following the meal, awards were presented to local organizations for their racial justice efforts. The Gala theme was, "We Are Done Dying."

Among the recipients of the 2020 Community Impact Award is a congregation of the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod - Hope Lutheran Church in the Northwest section of the City of Reading. The award citation reads, in part, "We are thrilled to honor the church's dedication and commitment to making a difference with programs supporting the fullness of life for the residents living in our community."

Hope hosts the largest food pantry in the Helping Harvest Food Bank service area. Additionally, Hope's Table community outreach ministry provides a weekly meal for area residents; and Hope sponsors Café Esperanza, a One World Everybody Eat affiliate. The congregation has also offered summer and after-school programs for the multicultural children and youth who live in the neighborhood.

Pastor Mary Wolfe, who accepted the award on behalf of the congregation, commented, "We are so honored to be considered for this award. Hope has been enriched in many ways through the relationships we have been privileged to form with all of our neighbors."

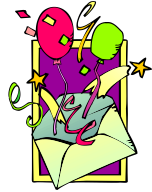


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2354 Grove Road, Allentown PA 18109; 610-266-5101. nepsinfo1988@gmail.com.
View the full color edition online at <http://nepasynod.org>.

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.

January 2	Joan Stettler
January 4	Marian Stettler
January 14	Irene Isamoyer
January 17	Walter Dietrich, Jr.
January 20	Mary Haas
January 30	Roeller Dietrich
January 30	Elaine Heffner
February 4	Irene Stauffer
February 12	Helen Noll
February 15	Margaret Stettler
February 17	William Bird
February 19	Ted Silliman
February 19	Carol Bauman
February 22	Fred Radcliffe
February 25	George Isamoyer
February 28	Janet Fegely



OUR SYMPATHIES TO

... the family of Harold Angstadt.

CLEARANCES NEEDED

Make copies of your completed Criminal and Child Abuse clearances and send them to the church along with the other paper that needs to be signed. Clearances must be on file in the church office when Sunday School and church events resume. Put "Attention Karen" on the outside of envelope.



MISSION STATEMENT

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

UPCOMING HOLY COMMUNIONS

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



January 3	Holy Communion (tentative)
February 7	Holy Communion (tentative)

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The next issue of the newsletter will come out the beginning of February. If you have any information to be included in the February newsletter, please have it in the church office by **January 15th**.