

THE BEACON

WINTER 2024 EDITION

Embodied



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 the Main Cup 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 3 p.m.
November 20	J.O.Y. Luncheon (No Joy Luncheon in December)
November 24	Christ the King Worship
November 28 & 29	Office Closed for Thanksgiving
December 3	Decorating for Christmas at 9 a.m.
December 4	Wednesdays in Advent - Meal, Worship, and Children's Program starting at 6 p.m.
December 5	Table Talk at Tapias at 6 p.m.
December 7	Christmas in the Valley
December 8	Advent Craft and Game Night (Youth Group too!)
December 8	Joint Worship and Children's Christmas Pageant at 10 a.m.
December 11	Wednesdays in Advent - Meal, Worship, and Children's Program starting at 6 p.m.
December 15	Christmas Caroling at 5:30 p.m. (Snow Date is December 20 at 5:30 p.m.)
December 18	Wednesdays in Advent - Meal, Children's Program, and Blue Christmas starting at 6 p.m.
December 19	Cookie Exchange at Jill Lizzi'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 1	Church Office Closed
December 29	Lessons and Carols at 9 a.m. and 11 a.m.
December 31	Deadline for Annual Report submissions to the Church Office
January 2	Table Talk at the Main Cup
January 5	Confirmation and Youth Group
January 12	Footprints
January 20	DayOff Program
January 15	J.O.Y. Luncheon
January 25	Town Hall Meeting at 6 p.m.
January 26	Town Hall Meeting at 10:00 a.m.
February 2	Joint Worship Service at 10 a.m. with FootPrints and Annual Meeting following worship
February 9	SNOW DATE FOR ANNUAL MEETING
March 5	Ash Wednesday and the beginning of Lent

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



A WORD FROM PASTOR DIANE

*He came down that
we may have love;
he came down that
we may have love;
he came down that
we may have love;
hallelujah forevermore.*

Text: Cameroon traditional

I was informed via social media two weeks ago that the way that Thanksgiving and Christmas fall this year are the shortest amount of time possible in our calendar. That's just three weeks. I am not a person who does the whole shopping early for Christmas thing. Kudos to you who can! My instant internal response to this news—oh crud. There's a whole lot that has to get done in that time not to mention the additional ministry opportunities that will be added to the schedule. When will I get it all done?

Personally, I needed a God reminder. I know there are A LOT of people and especially two of my four little ones who have some big feelings and expectations around Christmas and the events leading up to it. I know that letting folks

down will not make for the idyllic Christmas that I have envisioned and has been supported by the world around me. And yet, my calling reminds me that there is a deeper meaning to all this beauty and joy I am trying to help be seen.

At the heart of all of this is a gift of love that is the most important thing about this time of year. In Advent and Christmas we are welcomed to the good news that God loves us so much that God chooses to come among us and experience our life—the good, the bad, ALL OF IT. God does this so that God can totally identify with humanity in every single aspect. God is aware of my anxiety over meeting expectations. God is aware of the joy of being together and celebrating with festive meals and presents. God is aware of the need to step away and take a moment to breathe because I'm not feeling so joyful while the rest of the world is.

Whether all my "to-dos" get done and people's expectations are met in these next three weeks, there is something so much greater at play. God is with me in every



moment and understands exactly how I am feeling. God also is with me reminding me that there is more to these moments and more beautiful things yet to come. There is going to come a time when the greatest celebration will be when I will be reunited with those who I miss this time of year. All the ways I feel like things aren't right or what I hope will be redeemed and there will be unending joy in God's presence.

Advent and Christmas encompass all of these. God came down in Jesus that first Christmas and Jesus will come again all for the sake of God's love for this entire world. May we know and trust in that gift and promise in these days. Happy Advent and Merry Christmas to you all!

In Christ,

Pastor Diane Ray



A WORD FROM PASTOR MATT

My friends in Christ,

As we approach the close of another year, the month of December invites us into a season of reflection, anticipation, and renewal. For many, this time is marked by the joy of Advent—the season of waiting for the coming of Christ. It is a season not only of preparing our homes and hearts for Christmas but more so a time of remembering that the promise of Christ's birth is ultimately the promise of God's ongoing presence with us, a presence that brings light into our darkest moments.

Advent is the season of waiting. For Christians, this is not a passive waiting, but an active anticipation. Every year, I hear people say that Advent is the season of getting ready for Jesus to be born and I always chuckle a little and say, "Well, you are about 2000 years late." As we light the Advent candles, we remind ourselves



that the light of Christ continues to grow each and every day until our Lord returns. Advent calls us to look beyond the hustle and bustle of the holiday season, to pause and reflect on the deeper meaning of what it means to have Christ return. It reminds us that even in a world of uncertainty, God's promise remains steadfast. Christ is our hope, the One who brings light into our darkness, healing into our brokenness, and peace into our anxious hearts.

And then we move from preparing for the second coming of Christ to the season when we talk about the first time Jesus came into our world. And you all know that this is not my favorite time of the year, but I will say, having kids makes this season more bearable because I get to see the joy in their eyes. A few months ago, I took Thomas to see *Inside Out 2*. There was a line that really got me—"As you get older, maybe you experience less joy." That line really hit me and I have been pondering that line ever since we saw that movie because it's so true. The older I get, I experience less and less joy. But my kids, they experience joy every day and their joy radiates off them. I think we need to recognize that the Christmas season is filled with both joy and challenges. It is a time of celebration, but for many, it also brings sorrow, loneliness, or stress. We Christians walk this

delicate tightrope of sorts as we both celebrate the joy of God coming into our world while also holding the hands of those who find no joy in this season. Jesus' name, though, is not joy but Immanuel which means "God with us." Jesus is with us in both the good times and the bad.

As we journey through this Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, and time after the Epiphany of our Lord, let us remember that we do not have to wait alone. Let us remember that we are not abandoned in our challenges or joyless in our celebrations. Christ walks with us, and Jesus' presence gives us the strength and peace to navigate whatever the world brings our way. May this December be a time of profound peace and joy for you and your family. May we all find in the birth of Christ the hope and renewal we need to face whatever the future holds, knowing that He is always with us.

In Christ's,

A handwritten signature in cursive that reads "Pastor Matt Dyer".

So, what's been happening?

Sunday Morning Adult Formation

The Adult Christian Formation subcommittee has been working very diligently on making sure the Sunday morning Adult Education Classes are top notch and meeting the faith needs of our community. This fall, we have had classes on our stained glass windows, Zion's history, and are currently holding a class looking at the book of Romans. The only problem they have been having is finding a room and a space that can fit everyone in the class! Special thanks to our Christian Formation Ministry who has been working hard to provide not only quality adult education and formation, but also supporting elementary, middle, and high school formation as well.



Cleaning and Organizing

This past year has seen a lot of cleaning and decluttering. We have a lot of random things in closets but thanks to some dedicated people, we have been able to clean up our space and make it more usable. A few weeks ago, Linda Kinna-Engel, Clinton Appleby, Gene Appleby, and Pat McIntosh were working in the choir room and found some fun treasures. If organizing is a passion of yours, we can put that passion to good use here!

Bible Presentation Sunday

At the start of our programmatic year, we take time to set apart and bless Bibles that we will be using throughout the coming year. When a child in our congregation reaches the third grade, we like to replace the children's Bible they received at baptism with a more age-appropriate Bible. This year, Grant Saxton received his Bible to use both at Sunday School and at home. We also keep a stock of Bibles on hand for adults who might be looking for a new one to start using for study or devotional use. This year, we finally found a very good translation of a large print Bible to hand out.





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 this year with two incredible DayOff programs. On October 3, we took a van load of kids (and also filled up another chaperone's car as well) to Gettysburg for a bus tour of the battlefield, pizza lunch at United Lutheran Seminary followed by a tour of the campus, and then some ice cream from Half Pint Creamery (it might be some of the best ice cream on the East Coast...). After that, we all loaded back up in our car and had the kids serenade us with camp fire songs for the hour car ride home.



But the kids had another day off from school—election day! We decided to stay local and check out the Crystal Grottoes Caverns and play some duck pin Bowling. This time we had 22 kids registered which caused a little bit of a scramble the day before as we tried to secure enough drivers and seats!

Which is a pretty awesome problem to have these days! We offer these programs free of charge and that is because of some gracious donors. If you would like to make sure this incredible ministry can continue to happen here at Zion, consider donating \$50 and sponsor a child or volunteer to be a chaperone. And thank you!





Reformation 2024

507 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 three children in our community receive their first communion, Haley Bergman, George Luther, and Nicole Luther. It was also the day, 12 years before, that Pastor Diane was ordained!



50 years ago...

Marty Appleby, Teresa Cevallos, and Jack Scott (not pictured are Julie Fulton, Martin Huffer, Steven Leatherman, and Dana Lichtenberger) became members of Zion Lutheran Church. 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!



And then we had lunch!

We started a tradition a few years ago to share a meal after our combined worship on Reformation. This year did not disappoint!





A Trip to the Museum of the Bible

This past October, a group from Zion loaded up in our van and took a trip down to D.C. to check out the Museum of the Bible. The museum was large and there was so much to see, so much so that most of us only got through a few floors before it was time to leave. We hope to do more of these trips in the future!

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 day, 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...

Joyce McAllister
 Lyla Scott
 Janet Young
 John Gladhill
 Ronald Trusty
 Cathy Baker
 Anna Kepler
 Nancy Newkirk
 Linda Crummitt
 Richard Greenawalt
 Marianna Bere
 Paul Blickenstaff
 Russell P. Main
 Doris Taylor
 Darlah Adams
 Jerry Bidle
 Bill Lantz
 Pastor Ronald Reaves
 Bobbi Miller
 Janice Wisner
 Bruce Brackman

Quilt and Fiber Show

Thankfully, the Quilters didn't have to worry about a hurricane this year ruining their show. In fact, the weather was beautiful. This year's show was even bigger than last year. They gathered a number of their prized quilts, quilts from the community and even a few older wedding dresses to show them off. They even had some demonstrations and items for sale. A lot of people came to check them all out. If you didn't make it to church that weekend, let's just say that there were quilts everywhere and each quilt had a story to tell! Nice job, ladies!



Middletown Heritage Festival

The week of rain turned into sunshine!

After a week of steady rain, we were worried that this year might be another wash like last year. But around 9 a.m., the clouds departed and we were blessed with a beautiful warm day. 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!



Grand Marshal for the 2024 Heritage Parade

This year, the Huffer Family was honored to serve as the Grand Marshal of the parade. The Huffer Family have been members here at Zion for some time and we thank them for their constant care of both the land, our community, and our congregation! It was a honor well deserved!

Apple Butter

On the morning of October 26 at 5 a.m., an orange glow could be seen coming from the back of our cemetery. It was the glow of fire beneath large pots of applesauce that would eventually be cooked down and made into apple butter. It is not a hard process but it does require hours of stirring and tending this delicious elixir that Zion is known around the county for making every year.



Though it might be cold and early, it is the gathering of folks that really makes apple butter making fun! There are a lot of jokes and storytelling around the kettles and inside the kitchen. Everyone pitches in and makes easy work of all the tasks.



Once the apple butter is made, it needs to be placed in jars and a dedicated group of people process them for canning. A label is put on top and it is ready for pick up. We still have lots of apple butter left to sell. It makes a great holiday gift! We sold out of the quart jars but we do have plenty of pint jars available at a cost of \$6. Pick yours up today by contacting the Office or Dixie! And thank you to all the volunteers who came out and helped this year.

Community & Church Events

**Saturday
December 7, 2024**

MIDDLETOWN'S CHRISTMAS IN THE VALLEY

And, from Thanksgiving through December
Find the Elves on MAIN STREET and Write a letter to Santa by the 15th!

with all its CHARMS

Bring an Unwrapped Toy! Get a Santa Sack!

- ♦ Visit with Santa after he Comes to Town
- ♦ Mrs. Claus tells stories at More's Ice Cream
- ♦ Roast Marshmallows with the Boy Scouts
- ♦ Photo op w/ Frosty at Middletown Valley Bank
- ♦ Lighting of the Town Tree
- ♦ Caroling with MHS Chorus
- ♦ Christmas Bears from Middletown Rec Council
- ♦ Holiday Music Program at Zion Lutheran Church
- ♦ And, so much more!

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 7th, 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 Mary Ann Marcantonio or Jamie Derr.

Christmas Caroling

**Sunday, December 15
at 5:30 p.m.**

We will meet in the church parking lot and load up on a tractor and wagon so that we can go around town to sing carols. We will also have the church van for those who might need it. We plan to get back to church a little after 7 p.m. for some hot chocolate and cookies.

READY, GET SET, BAKE!

COOKIE EXCHANGE

Come enjoy a fun night with food, drinks, and fellowship!

Dec. 19, 2024 • 6pm
Jill Lizzi's Home
102 Prospect Street
Middletown, MD

Don't forget to bring your own reusable cookie containers!

FOR COOKIE EXCHANGE: Bring 5 dozen cookies of your choice (10 bags with 6 cookies in each bag).

RSVP to either:
Jamie Derr at 301-305-9796
Jill Lizzi at 301-514-5736

Worship Opportunities



Christ the King Sunday

A Journey through the Seasons

A special liturgy on Sunday, November 24th, at the 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. 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

Being with...

The Community of Christ and the Incarnation

Dinner begins
at 6 p.m.

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

Worship begins
at 7 p.m.

Blue Christmas Worship

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

Wednesday,
December 18 at 7pm



THE WORD BECAME FLESH
AND LIVED AMONG US

CHRISTMAS EVE

Worship

Join us this Christmas as we celebrate the birth of our Savior and
God entering our world in human form.



Family Worship at 4 p.m.

Candlelight with
Handbells at 7 p.m.

Candlelight with Choir and Orchestra
at 10:30 p.m.

More Information about Worship and Times can be found by visiting
www.ZionMiddletown.org

Being the Church...

Interview with Bruce Albright by Mary Ann Marcantonio



Bruce before heart transplant
with son Christopher

Many of us have been praying for Bruce Albright in his recent health scare. Many have been wondering how Bruce is doing, so I interviewed him. In telling his story, it helps to know a bit more about him and his wife, Carolyn.

Bruce grew up in Warwick, New York, a small dairy farming community 50 miles north of New York City. He graduated from Muhlenberg College, like his dad and uncle (a Lutheran pastor.) He majored in both history and Russian, and took a Contemporary Soviet Culture course which opened an opportunity for him to study abroad for two semesters. While in Russia he had a chance encounter with Alexander Solzhenitsyn, a Nobel Prize awardee for Literature, who had been persecuted by his government, and was still courageously able to keep his values despite risking re-imprisonment. This influenced Bruce immensely as his young life unfolded and led him into a career as a supervisory attorney for the US Government.

Carolyn and Bruce met in a way that could make a blockbuster movie due to so many chance meetings. While in graduate school, Carolyn first met a high school classmate of Bruce's who introduced her to his parents; then she met Bruce's sister when she took a job at the University of Rhode Island; Carolyn's dean in the URI School of Nursing where she taught had Bruce as her paper boy in his youth. There were many other coincidences spanning five years. After a long engagement, they were married October 9, 1982 in an Armenian Orthodox Church by Carolyn's Armenian Priest and Bruce's Russian Professor, a Lutheran minister ordained in Latvia. If you saw the movie, *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, just change Greek to Armenian and you've got the idea about the wedding ceremony and reception. There were two bands for their reception. At 10 pm the American Band packed up and the Armenian band cranked up the music. The venue had four other weddings that soon crashed Bruce and Carolyn's party and joined in the celebration.

Bruce always wanted to be a part of the Washington DC political life. He fortunately was mentored by US Congressman Ben Gilman. Besides being Bruce's mentor, Ben became a dear friend and in many ways a second father who influenced him to go to law school and enter public service as a federal government attorney. This encouragement launched a long career in legal services mostly for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) in which he held many positions within the agency. He also coached and mentored several hundred young lawyers who presently hold positions of responsibility in the government and private sector. Despite the pressures of work, Bruce found time to serve on nonprofit boards, including Mar-Lu-Ridge, Lutheran Volunteer Corps, Seminary Ridge Museum and Educational Center, and assist Venture Crew 758 at Camp Catocin BSA. He is an Eagle Scout.

The mortgage crisis in 2008 and the years following as a senior counselor for HUD, meant Bruce worked very long hours putting in about 18 hours a day and more often than not, staying overnight at the home of a friend who lived in Arlington. But this took a toll on him and his family, so in 2020 it was time to think about "what do I do with the rest of my life." After a career of 42 years Bruce was ready for retirement... catching up on reading those books that have been waiting for him, tending to his garden, the hikes planned but never completed and a host of other things. So in January 2020, Bruce said good bye to friends, co-workers and that ugly commute down I-270.

But after 2 years of retirement, things began to change. After Christmas 2021, both Bruce and his wife came down with colds. Carolyn recovered quickly but he did not. He chalked up his lack of improving as a result of wallboard dust due to long overdue home renovations. In May 2022 after numerous tests were done, cardiologists found that his heart was working at one-fifth capacity. He was treated with the drugs used for heart failure (including one designed by his niece, a pharmaceutical research developer) and a combination defibrillator pacemaker was implanted. Unfortunately, there was no improvement. By March 2023, Bruce could barely walk a ¼ mile. The concerns grew as Bruce was always active and walked 3 to 4 miles a day. At a routine doctor's visit, it was suggested that he explore alternative heart therapy. It was at this visit when the option "heart transplant" was first heard.

Bruce and Carolyn made an appointment at John Hopkins Hospital for the 12th of May. By this time Bruce's physical stamina was very weak but he was determined to walk into the hospital on his own and admitted immediately. He had been diagnosed with congestive heart failure-but it wasn't until after the transplant surgery when it was discovered that the failure was caused by rare Cardiac Sarcoidosis of the heart. After several months of preparing that a transplant might be his only option, because of his age, a transplant would not be available. Bruce had just turned 70. Johns Hopkins viewed 70 as riskier outcomes, given a limited number of organ donors. The spunk in Carolyn was fired up! As a former ICU nurse manager and a nurse educator for years with a doctoral degree, she applied simple logic and love for her husband. So, "if a 69 years old comes in", she asks, "just 6 months younger than Bruce and has no medical conditions, a transplant would be performed, but a man six months over without other conditions doesn't qualify?" What an advocate they had on their hands! Using her vast medical knowledge and research skills, she and three other doctors on the transplant team convinced the Hopkins transplant team to do at least the tests necessary to determine his overall health. By the end of May, every test imaginable was completed and Bruce was found to be in great health...except the heart.

Through persuading by Bruce's family, prayers from both known and unknown prayer warriors, and the compassion and love of a very caring God, Bruce's name was added to the national waiting list for a heart. He was told to be patient and that the wait could be at least six months. While waiting, his doctors and nurses told him that the patients that recovered best have a regular exercise regimen. He walked the corridors of the Cardiac Critical Care Nursing Unit starting at two trips a day to eight times a day; he built up the ability to use a stationary bike while sitting two hours a day. One of his nurses saw to it that he was able to "rock" with tunes from Led Zeppelin, Rolling Stones and other bands as he made the many laps and "bike trips" from his room. He insisted on being up, out of bed, bathed, and dressed before breakfast came every day. Meanwhile, the search for a heart of someone with the same weight, height and blood type as Bruce had begun. It is during this time that Bruce receives a very uplifting message from Zion; a video taken from the lectern, with those in attendance waving hello and of course mountains of prayers with many cards and letters that followed!

Early morning of June 28th, at 7:30 a.m., he received the news that a heart was found. After calling his family, he was wheeled out of his room towards the surgical wing, the entire staff that got to know him for six weeks clapped and cheered as he was escorted down the hall. The doctors had explained to Carolyn that the surgery would be about 10 to 12 hours. You can only imagine the fear in her face as the cardiac transplant surgeon doctor entered the waiting room just five hours later. The surgeon emphasized that Bruce did remarkably well and added,



Leaving Hopkins 16 days after heart transplant,
Bruce, Carolyn and daughter Alix

“We normally have to jump start the heart but it began beating, unassisted on its own.” Bruce spent three days in ICU and then went to a step down unit. On July 14th, just 16 days after receiving his new heart, he was released to enjoy his life. WOW! With 28 doctors and numerous staff, Bruce has only words of praise and gratitude to wonderful caring professionals at John Hopkins. It is sixteen months since Bruce came home and his new heart is performing well. He can do about 85% of what he was able to do before the onset of his heart disease. The biggest concerns for him now are infections and rejection of the heart.

If you encounter Bruce at church or in public, he may stand at a distance, because of risk of inadvertent infection, as well as being overwhelmed by numbers of people in a small space. Although he loves to see and talk with everyone, stress and infection risk causes him to avoid some social settings.

So what is the take away from my conversation with Bruce? The power of prayer has an impact on our lives and those we love but it can even change circumstances. In Bruce’s case, he anticipated a long wait for a matching heart but circumstances changed. In a short period of time, a match was found and through the God-given talents of medicine and God’s great mercies, Bruce is a reminder that miracles are still happening today. He emphasized that it was prayers that reinforced his attitude of “never give up!” The prayers had another unexpected twist, more was received than asked for. As a result of his recovery, circumstances have changed. Four otherwise healthy individuals over 70 have received heart transplants at Johns Hopkins in 2024 and are doing well. How can we explain this? I have searched for words and the best I can come up with is that God loves us!

Note—as Tolstoy wrote in his novel, War and Peace, God is love and Love is God, and each one of us is a particle of that love. How true that is as applied to the above.

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.

Christian Education

Sunday Mornings



WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

Grow in faith and help prepare for the coming week's lessons

WEDNESDAY MORNINGS AT 10:30 A.M.
IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM



WEDNESDAY NIGHTS AT 6:30 P.M.
IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM



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.

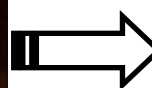
ELEMENTARY, MIDDLE, &
HIGH SCHOOL CLASSES

Theology and Bible
TABLE TALK
Food and Drink

FIRST THURSDAY
OF THE MONTH
6pm at the Main Cup

Donuts and coffee

Every Sunday
at 10 a.m.



In December, Table Talk will be held at Tapias and we will be talking about the concept of Free Will. We will also be talking about finding a new place to gather and meet in the new year.



YOUTH AND FAMILY MINISTRY



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 15
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



After the adult education class on stained glass windows, Donna Huffer hung up a large coloring sheet for people to color on and collectively create our own stained glass art. After a first communion class, some of the kids decided they wanted to join in on the project too. The next time you are in the Chapel, you can add your artistic abilities to the project as well.



2025 Footprints Upcoming Dates

January 12th

February 2nd

February 9th

March 9th

Join us on the second Sunday of each month at the 9:00 a.m. service 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 3 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 Taco Bar for dinner.



Christmas Pageant

Sunday, December 8
at 10 a.m.

No Stress. No Fuss. Seriously!

We know Christmas is busy and adding one more thing to your schedule will not help you. So we are going to do a no stress or fuss pageant this year.

Really, don't worry! Hearing the story told from the perspective of our youngest voices is special and holy regardless of anything that might happen!

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.

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

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.

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: it is chicken noddle & tomato soup. January: Boxed Mac and Cheese. February: Granola bars and pretzels. March: shelf stable milk. And 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.



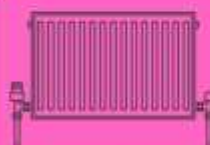
VBS is a great mission and ministry of Zion. We make sure every child who comes through our doors is welcome, fed, and included. We offer VBS free to everyone interested in participating, but that doesn't mean there isn't a cost.

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.

A Fire Alarm Pull Station

Our nearly 40 year old fire alarm system has finally reached the end of its life. Nobody really ever notices the fire alarm system but it is important part of making our space safe. The total cost of the project is \$30,000. Your donation or \$100 helps ensure that our building remains a safe place for all those who come to Zion for worship and community functions.



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.

Despite our desire for Mar-Lu-Ridge to be a place that welcomes all people, some of our spaces do not reflect this commitment. Unintentionally, some areas of our buildings limit accessibility and full participation. Increasingly we turn guest groups away because we are unable to meet their accessibility needs. This is not the hospitality we claim and does not reflect our aim in welcoming all people to engage in this sacred place. As we plan for the future of MLR and the next generation of outdoor ministry, we are committed to be good stewards of our spaces and resources by:

- improving accessibility for all visitors and guests
- refreshing spaces within our existing footprint that will honor our commitment

Project List

As contributions to the With Open Arms Campaign are received, we have prioritized the following improvements to increase MLR’s hospitality, inclusion, and accessibility for all people:

1. We will make the Ridge Inn fully accessible for all guests and visitors. An elevator will be installed so that guests with mobility needs may easily and safely access the top floor. Adding public restrooms on the lower level and installing automated doors will expand our hospitality in new ways.
2. Next, we plan to improve Cabin 3—our most-requested, most-used cabin—with an accessible restroom and a refreshed interior. Siding will replace the log exterior to prevent further decay from pests.
3. Carpenter bees have damaged a significant portion of Potomac Lodge’s exterior log structure. New concrete siding will be added to protect this building.
4. Cabins 1 and 2 are beyond repair and are no longer in use. These buildings will be removed to allow for increased green space. The old swimming pool at Area 3 is no longer serviceable. We plan to remove this feature and level the ground for group gathering space. This area is in near-constant use thanks to renovations and upgrades by MLR staff. In time, we will develop this space with an accessible pavilion.
5. In 2020, MLR secured the main camp water reservoir, which was leaking. Gifts to the With Open Arms Campaign will help to quickly clear the remaining \$220,000 debt acquired for the reservoir development.

A Letter from our Executive Director

Friends of Mar-Lu-Ridge,

God is moving through and among this ministry. For scores of summer campers, youth, adults, and families, Mar-Lu-Ridge is a place of sanctuary. It is a place where the noises and distractions of the world fall away, allowing space to engage with God’s created world, to hear God’s reassuring promises.



What a welcome gift in these times! We are a community with a rich legacy. Our retreat groups and campers are diverse and faithful. As we build on the commitments of leaders and supporters from the last 63 years and position Mar-Lu-Ridge for a strong and vibrant future, we are renewing our efforts to provide a safe and inclusive environment which reflects the lessons Jesus taught us: To love one another, even as I have loved you. (John 13:34)

Renovating Ridge Inn for increased accessibility and hospitality is a big step for Mar-Lu-Ridge, but one that will have even greater return on our investment in welcoming people to encounter God’s love through sacred hospitality, deepening relationships, and care for creation. Through this plan, we will be able to serve people in ways we are unable to at this time – especially groups and individuals with mobility needs. When these campaign initiatives are completed, the manner in which we welcome people will be more fully realized.

I am energized by the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of youth and adults of every walk of life and by the restoring messages of God’s grace and love which will frame the way we think of each other and of ourselves. The impact of Mar-Lu-Ridge lives on in generations of campers, retreat guests, staff alumni, and our congregations.

I hope you’ll join in this campaign for Mar-Lu-Ridge—for the future of our ministry throughout the region and beyond.

God’s peace,
Sarah Lefler, Executive Director



To date, Mar-Lu-Ridge has received \$3,350 from Zion Members towards their Capital Campaign. You can help make that dream possible! To learn more about their campaign, visit, www.mar-lu-ridge.org/with-open-arms-capital-campaign/

Poinsettia Orders and Lutheran World Relief (LWR) Monetary Gifts

The Altar Guild will be accepting poinsettia orders and LWR monetary gifts through December 1, 2024. Poinsettias and LWR gifts are \$11.00 each. All poinsettia orders and LWR gifts must be in by December 1. Order forms are on pages 23 and 24 . 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.



2024 POINSETTIA ORDER FORM

Poinsettia orders will be accepted through December 1, 2024. 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 10:45 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 1. No orders after that date please.**

2024 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 1, 2024, 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.

2024 Monetary Gift for LWR

Each gift is \$11.00

Total Amount enclosed \$_____

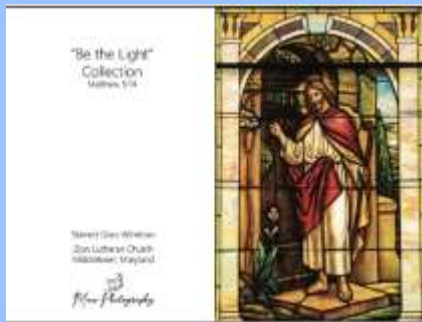
In Memory of:

Given by:

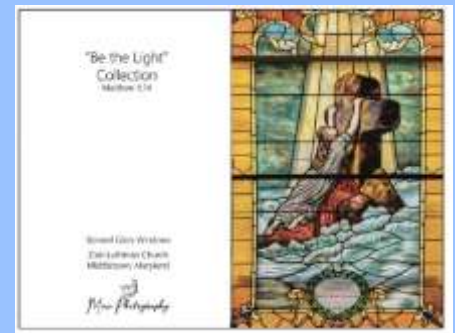
In Honor of:

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



MVPHP Holiday Program 2024



The Holidays are approaching and again **Middletown Valley People Helping People** is asking for your generous help by sponsoring a family for this Holiday Season. Last year we provided Holiday Assistance for 195 children and 85 families. It was only through your community effort that so many were assisted.

The MVPHP Holiday Assistance Program provides:

- Younger aged children with a toy and a \$100 gift card.
- Teens (still in school) with toiletry items and a \$100 gift card.
- Families with a \$100 gift card for their holiday meal.

There are many ways to help!

- Contact MVPHP to sponsor all or part of a family.
 - Phone: 301-371-3119
 - Email: mvphpmd@gmail.com
 - Online: <https://tinyurl.com/MVPHP24>
- Donate money toward gift cards.
 - Online: <https://mvphp.org/support/> or use the QR code to the right.
 - Check: mail to P.O. Box 477, Middletown MD 21769 and write "holiday assistance" on the memo line.
- Donate toiletries for teens.
 - Drop off full-sized deodorants, shampoos, conditioners, body wash, bar soaps, toothpaste, floss, toothbrushes and athletic socks at the town hall (31 W Main Street) by November 22.
- Donate toys at Christmas in the Valley on December 7th.

Donate online:



Middletown Valley People Helping People's 2024 Holiday Assistance Pre-Registration form:

Registrants must pre register before **Wednesday, November 27, 2024** for this event and documentation will be required at the time of registration

- Adults need photo identification and proof of address. A letter of guardianship is necessary for children not in an adult's immediate family.
- Children (1-18 years of age, until a senior in high school) need a birth certificate, medical card with DOB, Passport or a Report card.
- MVPHP will collect the necessary information to determine financial need. Qualification can be met if you receive Federal or State assistance or meet the income requirements set by United for Alice income calculator. <https://www.unitedforalice.org/alice-income-status-tool>

Once you are fully registered you will receive an assigned pick up time, scheduled for Saturday, December 14, 2024.

In person registration will take place at the Middletown Library on Saturday, November 9th from 9a.m until 12 noon.

Parent Name _____ Phone Number _____

Address _____

Email address _____

Grocery Store Gift Card Weis _____ Safeway _____ WalMart _____.

Child's Name	Age	Grade	School	Gift Card Choice Amazon or WalMart

Contact us at (301) 371-3119 or MVPHPMD@gmail.com if you have any questions.

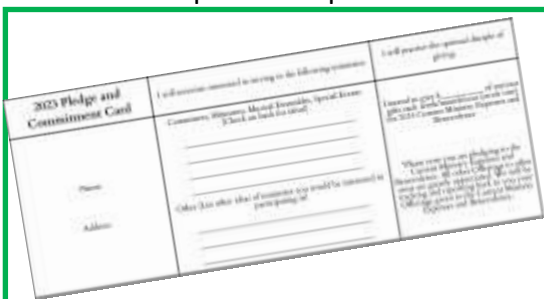
Ministry Updates

Flower Chart 2025

The 2025 flower chart will be posted outside the Living Library after Thanksgiving. The cost of the altar flowers is \$62.00 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 homemembers that receive them after the services.

Baby Hats

Zion knitters are proud to announce that 67 premie hats and 4 baby blankets are going to Lily's Hope for distribution. This is an ongoing ministry so anyone making hats for the premies, please see Alexa Masser to talk about a partnership.



2025 Pledge Report as of November 10, 2024

Total # Received

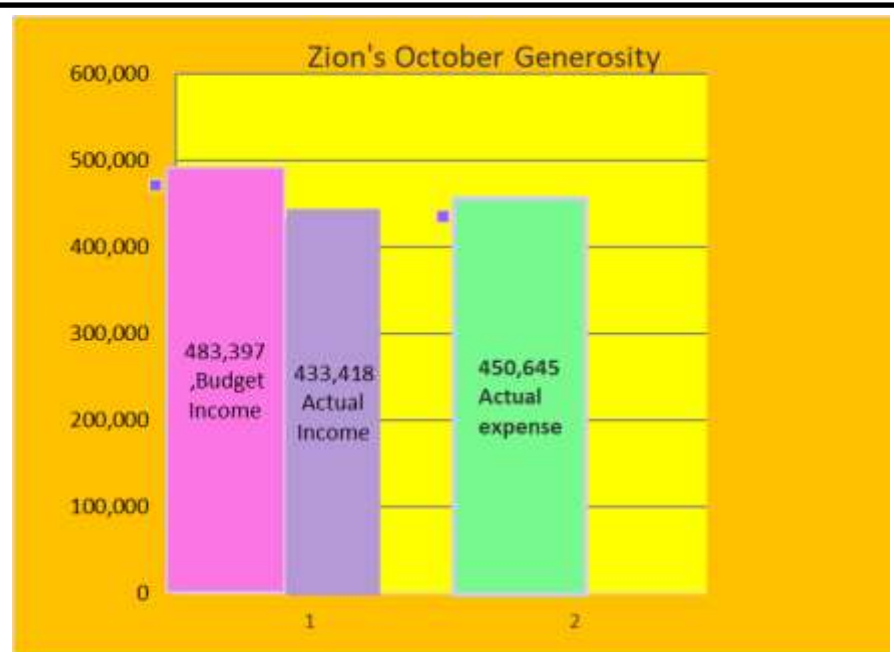
73

Total Dollars Pledged

255,413 (40% of Budget)

Pledge Goal

\$386,472 (60% of the Budget)



Budget/Income Information– YTD as of October 31, 2024

YTD Proposed Budget income \$483,397 vs

YTD Actual Income \$433,418.

YTD Proposed Budget Expense \$483,598 vs

YTD Actual Expenses \$450,645 .

Actual Income is less than expenses in Oct 2024 by \$17,227.



2024 PLEDGE AND COMMITMENT CARD

Pledge Cards can still be turned in!

Everyone should have received a pledge card in the mail back in September. If you didn't receive one or you have misplaced it, you can still turn one in. We have some extras on the bookshelf outside the Office or you can fill one out electronically by scanning the QR code! Even if you filled one out last year, we ask that you fill out a new one this year . And thank you for your continued support to the ministry at Zion.



JOY +50 (Just Older Youth) Lunch

J.O.Y. 50+ seniors have been enjoying lunch and programs/bingo for the past few months. The J.O.Y 50+ usually 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. The holiday luncheon will be held Nov 20 with a full turkey dinner including pumpkin pie. Cost is \$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 welcome!



Upcoming 2025 JOY 50+ Lunch Dates

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

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 3, 2024. We could use a little help if you have some free time. We always have fun decorating, so we hope you can join us!



Golf Tournament Planning Team

We are planning to hold another golf tournament May 5, 2025. If golf is your passion and you feel called to support the mission and ministry of Zion, please consider volunteering to be on the planning team. We also need people to serve on the team who are connected to the community and can help in creating sponsorships. Contact Deb or the Office at 301-371-6500 to let us know you can help!



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 625 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.

Noisy Offering Updates

September—Lutheran Disaster Response

\$1197.78

October—Frederick Rescue Mission

\$378.07

Thank you to all who donated!



Upcoming Noisy Offerings

November 16th & 17th

ELCA World Hunger

December 16th & 17th

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 246,334 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"

Allocation of Donations

Selian Hospital	\$ 300
Bunda DDH	\$1,500
Kiabakari Bible College	\$1,500
Well Evaluations	\$2,000
Bicycles for Evangelists	\$1,200
Female Sem. Scholarship	\$ 711
Soccer Balls	\$ 200
Women's Group	\$ 200
Sirari Parish Donation	\$ 39
Total Donated	\$7,650



Mission Work

This past summer, Pastor Dave Baker and Lois Ahalt traveled with a group from our Synod to the Mara Diocese in Tanzania. They took with them a number of donations including \$1200 from Zion. All together, the group brought \$7,600 from our Synod for them to use in their work.

****Official Notice****

Town Hall and Annual Meeting Dates!

Town Hall—Saturday, January 25, 2025
at 6:00 p.m.

Town Hall—Sunday, January 26, 2025
at 10:00 a.m.

Annual Meeting—February 2, 2025

Snow Date—February 9, 2025

****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 12. 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.



A second helping – The Church Basement Ladies Sequel

The ladies are back and funnier than ever. *A Second Helping* picks up the story in 1969 with a changing world. As Vietnam War protests swell and women everywhere demand equal pay for equal work, the ladies in the church basement kitchen face changes of their own. From the matriarch to the mom-to-be, the women find strength in each other as they deal with the changes from below the House of God! Playing at Way Off Broadway, Frederick MD. When: Sunday May 4, 2025. Doors open at 1230 – Show starts at 2:15. Tickets are \$61 per person (includes dinner and gratuity). Contact Shelly Gladhill at 301-788-7585 or shelly-gladhill@gmail.com for tickets.

Here's What is Coming!

Adult Sunday School

December 15 th - January 12 th	Book of James: <i>You're Either Walking the Walk or Just Running Your Mouth</i> by Todd Linn	Donna Huffer
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And in 2025, look for these engaging topics:

- ◆ Intergenerational Program: Tanzania
- ◆ *Redirection: Discovering Hope in the Unexpected* by Susan Vitalis
- ◆ Zion History: More from Mary Ann on the Saints
- ◆ *Widows Among Us: Stories and Insights* By Karen Smith Racicot and others
- ◆ "Pastor, What are you doing?" Mysteries behind worship service rituals



**Wesley Davisson Hopson
J.Richard Staples**

With Sympathy



With our deepest sympathy we keep in our thoughts and prayers the families of:

Jerry Bidle

Bill Lantz

Pastor Ronald Reaves

Bobbi Miller

Janice Wisner

Corinne Humble

News to share?

Please let us know of important events, births, deaths, etc. that have happened over the past few months. Email or call the Church Office.



John Brunner, Cheryl, Noelle, Beverly Bidle, Samn Huffer, Patricia Pettingall, Family of Dennison Plumbing, Family of Tim Quinn, Grace Blumenauer, Susie Wiggins, Peggy Zembower, Ruth Ann Derr, Barry B., Gail G., Lucretia Reaves, Katana Lewis, Debby Knipple, Larry DiGiulio, Ken Young, Carol O'Brien, Pat McIntosh, Junior Wiles, Mike Fath, Kris Marcantonio, John Lettiere, Jr., Ursula Powell, Pat Hansen, Jane Nalborczyk, Eric Kinna, Ronnie Kinna, Linda Stottlemeyer, Anita, Gary, Kay Wachter, Michael Easton, Tristan Vail, Beth Smith, Lorene Huffer, Bruce Albright, Marty Appleby, Judith Smith, Jim Pearson, Jackie Bello, Trish Tollefson, Skippy Zimmerman, Sarah Gladhill, Ruby Pyles, 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.

Check
out the
website!



We have some great features on the member page. Visit www.ZionMiddletown.org/members-area

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!