

ZION NEWS

For the Members, Family and Friends of Zion Blue Mountain United Church of Christ

I am through and through PA Dutch. As far back as I've been able to look into my genealogy, it is there, and nothing else is. I have pride in that, but I'm also experienced, educated, and wise enough to know that the PA Dutch culture (which many of us share, but not all) like any other culture has its good points and bad points. Things that help, and honestly, things that hinder as well. It also has changed over time, and will likely continue to change.

One of the things I believe has been a detriment to many churches in our faith/cultural tradition has been our spiritual understanding of stewardship. In short, how we think about money. What it is for, what we do with it, how much we need (in our personal lives and as a church), how we acquire it, and so forth.

I'm not convinced that it has always been that way, and I'm not sure how it ended up the way it is. After all, many of our local Christian friends seem to have a much different viewpoint, than many of us. As an example, our Mennonite, Brethren, and Amish neighbors clearly see their tithing as an integral part to living out the faith they claim. They, like others, also seem to have a great deal of peace about financial matters in both their personal and spiritual lives. I admire that. I can certainly understand why, as it is discussed quite often in scripture. It would be hard for anyone to say that it isn't a significant part of our spiritual life and practice.

While I don't know exactly when it will begin, I do want you all to know that I will be giving a series of sermons on stewardship and

giving prior to the end of the year. In these sermons I will share my personal experiences, beliefs, successes, and shortcomings; all in the context of a solid biblical foundation.

I believe wholeheartedly that the good folks of the Zion Blue Mountain UCC community can make great progress in this area with an honest discussion. Even if you still insist on keeping that discussion between yourself and God. That progress will continue to ensure our role in this region as a Christian center of worship, fellowship, mission, and spiritual formation for generations to come. It will also have immediate results in our church life.

I know for many this is uncomfortable. Trust me; I'm already shoring up my backbone for the possibility of sneers and comments. I'm prepared. It is my hope, as I care a great deal about you all; that you prepare as well. Together we can approach this with the right perspective so that we experience joy and growth in our spiritually life. That is really the preferred method for us all. Tithing to the building up of God's kingdom isn't like "paying dues." It's a matter of being cheerfully obedient to a God who has given you more than you could ever repay.

Here's my challenge for this church. Biblical understandings often teach that tithing 10% of your income is the standard spiritual practice. Certainly, some give more, and many give less. Could you start, even before this stewardship sermon series, by simply increasing your current level of giving by at least 10%? I promise that by the time you receive this newsletter, I will have cheerfully increased mine by more than that.

~Pastor Stump



Join us online as we bring the Gospel into your home!

We are on Facebook Sunday mornings at 10:30 am and would love to have you join us.

Please “LIKE and SHARE” our worship post or comment and let us know that you watched, whether it was “Live or Later”. This helps us know that we are reaching you. Also feel free to type in prayer requests (first names only, and what kind of prayer they are in need of...comfort, peace, healing, praise etc.).

We also are emailing the YouTube link to those who receive email. If you are interested in having the link emailed please contact us at lshupp@zionbluemountainucc.org.

You may also listen to worship over the phone, these recordings are posted by 11 am on Sunday mornings. Call 610 - 410 - 9797



DRIVE THROUGH COMMUNION August 2, 2020

We served about 30 members and friends at our July Communion.

We hope more join us at 9 am on Sunday August 2. Cars should line up in the parking lot, receive your sacraments and park after your blessing to reflect.

MISSIONS

across the street & around the world

The Missions committee has gotten approval to place a Little Free Library on the church property near the entrance to the preschool. Pastor Jason and a few members had a lemonade stand in town and raised \$200 to buy books for the library. We have an anonymous donor purchasing the receptacle and once that arrives we will be placing it near the preschool entrance.

The Food Pantry has been blessed this year to be the recipient of fresh produce from Frieden's Shartlesville's Community Garden as well as donations from Salem United Methodist, Shoemakersville and Frieden's Lutheran in Bernville. Please don't forget our pantry will accept your garden overflow! God is Good.



To the family of Betty
Symanowicz.

Betty passed away July 27, 2020





8/1 Bree Shanaman
8/2 Reid Schrack
8/3 Alexa Shupp
8/4 Richard Yeager
8/5 Erma Koenig
8/10 Linda Bausher
8/11 Marian Long
8/13 Kenny Machmer
8/14 Brady Breininger
8/15 Stephanie Miller

8/17 Tom Moorhead
8/20 Jill Baver
Cindy Snyder
8/25 Sharon Kominsky
Wendy Schutt
8/29 Alyssa Machmer
8/30 Josh Kline
8/31 John Miller III
Brett Schlappich

8/14 Marjorie & Allen Bashore married 55 years

8/21 Travis & Kristen Breininger married 16 years

8/27 Sue & Steve Shollenberger married 9 years

8/28 Beth & Kenny Machmer married 27 years

Greetings from the Trustees,

As we are challenged by this ongoing turmoil surrounding the world-wide pandemic, the Trustee's stay committed to working creatively to preserve and maintain our beautiful, physical location and the surrounding properties owned by Zion Blue Mountain UCC. We continue to explore the latest technologies and examine areas to improve the physical components of the church as they relate to how the church functions to serve in God's mission throughout the local community and beyond.

Together, we work with Pastor Jason in a climate of open communication to resolve any issues that arise as well as schedule routine maintenance around the church and other Zion facilities.

Throughout the summer and fall, the trustee's will be setting up 'Work Days' at the church to address various areas to improve. We encourage anyone who is interested in participating at these events to get in contact with Clint Faust, Bryan Houpt, Jon Schaeffer or Steve Shollenberger and keep an eye out across our social media platforms for news on upcoming event dates! ~Clint Faust, Trustee

A NOTE FROM YOUR PASTOR

I am in the office a lot during weekdays. Often even on weekends. I am available to talk by calling the office, or by making an appointment to come meet with me; with appropriate precautions during the pandemic. Appointments are best made between 10 am - 4 pm, but will certainly accommodate as best as I can.

If you ever have any concerns, or questions about my ministry practices, goals, beliefs, role, and vision; please speak with me directly. I promise the same courtesy and respect in return. - Rev. Stump

From the Conference Minister:

"Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns." Matthew 14:13-21

"Now when he heard this..." What he heard was that John was dead. Murdered. Jesus does what many of us do when the news is so bad. He retreats. He takes time alone to process and pray; to remember and to grieve.

But the crowds follow him. Perhaps they are unaware of what happened. Maybe they don't care or maybe they couldn't see past their own pain. That possibility resonates with me because when I'm in pain it's hard for me to see the pain of another. All I can do is feel the hurt that's inside of me. It's a dangerous place to be. Hurting people hurt people.

Jesus could have kept withdrawing and tried harder to hide. We do that in all sorts of ways (think screen time, shopping time, over-eating time). He could have shouted and yelled and spread his pain around to others (via Facebook, Twitter and email). Or he could have tried to get from others the sympathy they didn't have to offer.

He does none of these. The crowds moved Jesus to compassion. He was able to look beyond his own pain to see theirs. And so, he healed them. And when he was done healing them, he fed them. Mourning and grieving, and yet offering healing and life at the same time. This is what it looks like when humanity and divinity live together in the same place and/or in the same person.

It's easy to believe, consuming the news media rather than the Good News, that places like that don't exist anymore. They do. Like manna from heaven Jesus comes when hunger and hurts drive you to places outside your small world to encounter the Kingdom of God that lives with in you.

May it be so,
Pastor Bill

Rev. Bill Worley
Conference Minister

Here we are halfway through the year! Last year no one would have imagined being in a pandemic. Yet, here we are. The Consistory and church staff have been working on continuing the mission and building a vision and identity for Zion Blue Mountain even during a time when we are not together. This new lifestyle was never part of “our” plans. ‘Zoom’, ‘Watch party’ and ‘Facebook Live’ became common ways to communicate. We now gather in ways we’ve never imagined. It’s a process that does feel natural, but it works! One thing that is apparent is our congregation is committed to caring for one another and staying connected. Pastor Jason and members of Consistory took time to make phone calls to everyone just to check up on them when the pandemic began. They wanted to know that they are there for you and if you want to connect just make a call to them or to Pastor Jason. The church is still HERE.

Given the ever-changing nature of the COVID pandemic, Consistory continues to monitor best practices locally, statewide, and nationally, to determine a safe return to in-person worship in our sanctuary. We made an investment in installing screens to enhance our virtual worship, which is currently in progress and to enrich in person worship in the Sanctuary when we return. The Consistory, worship committee and Pastor Jason do a lot of planning and then re-planning after guidelines are changed. We continue to be very active from the church building. For now we continue to worship on Facebook and YouTube and we are coming up on our second drive thru Communion at the church on August 2nd.

Consistory Report

What else is happening in the life of the church?

Gentle Rain Preschool has been working just as hard preparing for re-opening under new state and CDC guidelines. They will be using the “old preschool” room in addition to the current room. This will help them accommodate the same amount of children while still physically distancing. We have installed new LED lights and emergency lighting in the room, thanks to John Emore! Finally, the carpets were cleaned and some painting will be done. After that we will be masked and ready!

Early August our Sexton house will be empty and the trustees will evaluate what needs to be done in order to get it ready to rent again. The house was inspected by an outside contractor for the township and they are awaiting that report. Hopefully after a few minor fixes we will be ready again for a tenant.

Pastor Jason is working on establishing an “Online Community” committee. The committee will focus on growing the church’s online ministry and addressing the technological needs associated with that effort.

Zion also hosted a Blood Drive and thank you to the efforts of Audrey Kirkhoff she filled EVERY spot. The donors at the church were able to donate 16 pints of seriously needed blood.

The church was also fortunate enough to be able to donate to the Opportunity House in Reading. This shelter houses homeless and feeds those in need from all over Berks County.

We extend deep gratitude to those who continue to support the Gospel work we do at Zion. The financial and in-kind donations to our ministries, as well as the time and talent offerings from those who continue to serve, are most appreciated. If you have any ideas that could improve our relevance during this time **please** reach out to Pastor Jason 610-488-7361.



Treasurer's Report

We can't possibly know how significant this financial impact will be or how long it will last, but we are preparing for it. We call upon ourselves to be good stewards and our friends to help us and pray for us as we also do our best to serve others.

We must be prepared to face up to these financial issues. First, we need to be alert to the needs of one another and be willing to share our resources. Zion Blue Mountain UCC has felt the negative effects for a significant amount of time, but we are committed to doing all we can for the health and other needs of our congregation members. We are dedicated to doing that first.

Below are a few keynotes related to our financial position; please feel free to reach out to me to discuss any specific questions you might have regarding our present finances or our upcoming budgeting procedures for 2021.

*Data is as of 6.30.2020

- ↑ Worship collections receipts have increased approx. \$15,000 compared to 2019 YTD.
 - A 21% increase – this is a tremendous group effort and we should all be very proud!
- ↓ Our Preschool and Fundraising receipts are below budget.
 - All fundraising events have been postponed for the foreseeable future.
 - The Preschool has implemented new safeguards and is prepared to open this fall.
- ↑ The Church received a PPP Loan in the amount of \$35,000, which has been used for the instructed purposes and we are waiting to receive official word that those funds be considered a grant for the Church.
- ↑ The Church has begun an “Unto Others” campaign, which is available to members of our local community who need financial assistance in specific areas due to COVID-19.

Overall, the increase in our worship collections and the addition of the PPP loan have aided to financially offset the decrease in our Preschool and Fundraising income.

I believe I can speak for all of the Consistory when I say - the increase in worship collects is a true testament to the members and friends of our congregation coming together, as we always have in the past to lift us through difficult times and position us to overcome all obstacles!

~ Clinton Faust, Treasurer



Zion (Blue Mountain) Church
PO Box 98 (6573 Old Rt. 22)
Strausstown, PA 19559

Staff

Minister: Rev. Jason Stump (pastorstump@gmail.com)

Office Administrator: Lisa Shupp (lshupp@zionbluemountainucc.org)

Consistory

Elders: Ruth Himmelberger, Wendy Schutt (Vice President), Karen Miller, Todd Moyer

Deacons: Barry Miller, Audrey Kirkhoff, Cindy Emore, Debra Carles

Trustees: Jon Schaeffer, Steve Shollenberger, Bryan Houpt, Clint Faust (President)

Contact Information

Pastor: 757-630-6577

Office Phone: 610-488-7361

Website: www.zionbluemountainucc.org

ZIONEWS is published monthly to keep our congregation and friends informed of current events, ministry opportunities, and other pertinent information. We reserve the right to print any letter or article, unless, in the opinion of the Elders, it is unsuitable for the newsletter. We also reserve the right to edit or alter any article for length and content.