

ZION NEWS

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

It has now been nearly two months from the time when churches all around the U.S. began to restart their live in-person worship services. After more than 3 ½ months without worship and fellowship, you would think Christians would have come racing back into their many church buildings. But to this point they haven't. Rather than a mass rush back, an overwhelming majority of Christians across the country have decided that they are not quite ready to take a chance on in person church.

For many churches, outdoor services have been the answer. But not all churches are ideally set up for live outdoor services. Some church's parking lots are not configured well or are split into different areas, much like ours. In many cases logistics of transmitting the FM signal can be a problem as well. Very large megachurches would have to conduct numerous services in order to cover all of their members (What a problem to have!) Even then, attendance at many of these churches has fallen off as well. All of this has left us pondering the question: How will God's church, and religion in general, endure beyond this pandemic? Our biggest concern right now is reaching everyone and sharing the body of Christ.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it." What Jesus is revealing to us is that nothing, not death, nor hell, nor anything in this life or in the life to come will stop Him from building His church, nor have

the power to destroy it. Therefore, does this mean that the church will be able to endure COVID19? If Jesus says that NOT EVEN HADES can overcome it, that's good enough for me! But now, the deeper question that we all must ask ourselves: Will our faith survive the coronavirus?

Many of us who consider ourselves Christians may not give much consideration to how essential the church is to our spiritual health—even to our mental and physical health. Strengthening faith involves support systems, being accountable to others and living in community. When a Christian is cut off from the church, whether due to a virus, a transportation issue or for any other reason, that person will tend to wither in their faith and drift away from Christ. The faith of most any individual will not flourish when hidden in seclusion. That is a foundational reason for the Church's existence. In order for our faith to survive and flourish, it requires the support and accountability of other Christians. Now, we realize that some of us are not capable of attending in-person church services at this time. We have Seniors living in retirement settings and there are those dealing with health issues who would be most susceptible to the coronavirus. We encourage those of you who fall into either or both of these categories to refrain from returning until you feel confident that it would be safe for you to do so. In the meantime, PLEASE keep attending online every Sunday! Online church is the next best thing to going to an in-person worship service, especially if you keep it interactive. Give words of encouragement to

others who are attending online with you. Reach out to another member who you feel you can confide in. Ask them to pray with you, online or by phone. Keeping up communication with others you trust is so important to your faith and to your mental health. This is all a part of living in a loving Christian community. It's about being Church!

But while some of you can't attend in-person services, many can. While there is no denying that the chances of contracting the coronavirus or passing it onto someone else is much lower if you remain in isolation, there comes a time when you must ask yourself: What are the risks to my physical, emotional and spiritual health if I don't go to church? What is really holding me back? We encourage you to listen to the words of Romans 8:15 "The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him

we cry, "Abba, Father." Each time we step outside our front door, we face risk to some extent. But mostly up to this point in time, we have not faced the type of dangers that we face at this moment. In our minds, at least for some of us, living for the glory of God far outweighed the nominal risks of everyday life. That being said, we want you and your faith to be able to withstand the trials of this pandemic. Therefore, in whatever way possible, make church—whether online or in-person—a priority for you and your family every week. We believe that it is vital that you and your family's faith survives COVID-19. While it is so easy to get out of rhythm, to become complacent and sleep in, the best way to strengthen and secure your faith is by worshiping with other believers—the rest of your family in Christ!

We pray for your good health, your safety, and for God's Peace and Blessings to be with you.





OCTOBER

Birthdays & Anniversaries

10/01 Allison Bashore
 10/02 Seth Stankiewitch
 10/03 Sarah Bentz
 10/05 Kyle Machmer
 10/07 Robert Blatt
 Richard Freed
 10/08 Grant Baver
 10/10 Lisa Simon
 Amy Himmelberger
 10/11 Jessica Varone
 10/15 Bailey Unterkofler

10/17 Shirley Breininger
 10/18 Nicole Wessner
 10/19 Karen Kissling
 10/20 Dwain Schlappich
 10/22 Jacob Carles
 Justin Bentz
 Pat Moyer
 10/25 Vera Breidigan
 10/26 Ruth Zerbe
 Travis Breininger
 10/30 Jackie Stankiewitch

10/02 Melinda & Jonathan Schaeffer married 49 years
 Russ & Joan Hartman married 49 years
 10/03 Vera & Pat Breidigan married 67 years
 10/04 Jackie & George Stankiewitch married 23 years
 10/06 Tom & Diane Moorhead married 30 years
 10/07 Monica & Scott Sechler married 31 years
 Justin & Corinne Bentz married 14 years
 10/08 Stephanie & Michael Miller married 26 years
 10/09 Doris & Byrd Wagner married 27 years
 10/11 Sandy & Allen Readinger married 34 years
 10/14 Elaine & Dennis Hamm married 53 years
 10/16 Rose & Richard Freed married 49 years
 10/23 Joyce & Stanley Deisemann married 55 years
 10/28 Scott & Susan Etchberger married 31 years

*Thank you to everyone that helped and came out to pick up dinner at our
 FREE COMMUNITY DINNER.*

MAKE MUSIC TO GOD

Sunday October 4 at 10:30 am service we will celebrate the one-year anniversary of our Music Minister, Barry Driesbach, with a "Communion Concert". The service has been designed to incorporate hymns throughout the communion celebration. We hope you will join us for this very inspiring service and to show your appreciation of our first year with Barry.



OCTOBER 4 ~ Worldwide Communion

If you would like to receive communion and are not attending in person worship services, we will be having a drive thru at 9 am. Elements will be prepackaged and Pastor Jason will bless and distribute the elements.



Articles for next month's Newsletter must be submitted by October 18

*One of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening
to what another has to say.*

WE ARE PROUD TO ANNOUNCE WE HAVE A FREE LITTLE LIBRARY!

A Little Free Library is a “take a book, return a book” free book exchange. Anyone may take a book or bring a book to share. Little Free Library book exchanges have a unique, personal touch. There is an understanding that real people are sharing their favorite books with their community; little libraries have been called “mini-town squares.” Ours is located outside of the Preschool doors, stop by and take a book or just look.



UPDATE ON RENTAL PROPERTY:

As many of you know there was a small kitchen fire at the former parsonage over the Labor Day weekend. The fire was contained to the upstairs kitchen portion of the house. The Consistory has been in communication with the insurance company and with Berks Fire & Water Restorations Inc. Fortunately, there were no injuries. However, the family is unable to use the kitchen and is using the downstairs facilities for the time being. The estimate from our insurance company for the damage is roughly \$28,500 and the Consistory is waiting to hear from Berks Fire & Water Restorations as to their estimate to fix the damaged portion of the house. We will continue to keep everyone updated on the progress of the repairs.

The other rental property has also been getting some updates on the electrical system and some basement repairs. We are hoping to be able to interview tenants in the very near future.

"You can't start the next chapter of your life if you keep re-reading the last one."



THANKSGIVING FOOD DRIVE



OCTOBER 4 – NOVEMBER 15

Once again, we are preparing for our annual holiday food bags.

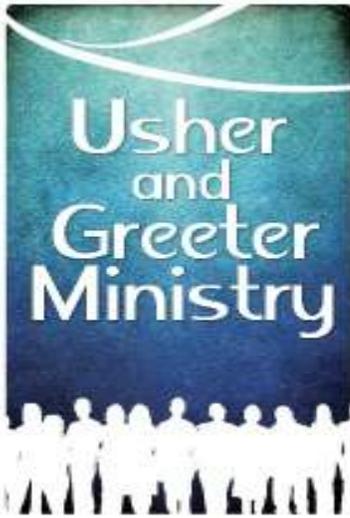
Any help you can give will be greatly appreciated.

We try to provide all the trimmings needed to make a holiday dinner. Below is a list of the foods currently needed to prepare the Thanksgiving bags.

Food items may be placed in the parlor.

THANKSGIVING FOOD NEEDS LIST

- Stove Top Stuffing
 - instant mashed potatoes
- canned or powdered turkey gravy
- canned corn or green beans
 - cranberry sauce
 - muffin or cornbread mix
- brownie or cake mix and icing or
- canned pumpkin pie filling and graham cracker crust or pie crust mix



Due to the changes that we have had to adopt because of COVID-19, we will temporarily forgo a formal greeter schedule. Instead, thanks to the help of the members of Consistory and worship committee who are in attendance at either Sunday morning service, we will ensure that entrance doors are opened for you, and that you can find the bulletins and other information you seek, as we joyfully welcome you to worship. If you plan to attend services regularly at this time and would like to be part of this corps of volunteers, please let Clint Faust or Pat Moyer know.



Sunday September 20th. we resumed in person worship. It was really good to see old friends and feel the power of God within our four walls. We had to choose our seats according to a color-coding system and maintain the recommended 6 ft. distance. We were allowed to have bulletins but they needed to be taken home. There were no hymnals or Bibles in the pews but that was okay, because we were introduced to screens that were showing a presentation that kept with the service. The service, in many ways, felt much the same. Familiar liturgy, call-and-response prayers and a thoughtful, relevant sermon helped. Everyone still loved being back inside a space that has nourished us so much over the years, even if the lack of participation sometimes made it feel like watching a performance. Many commented after the service that they were glad they came.



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 & Secretary), Karen Miller, Todd Moyer

Deacons: Audrey Kirkhoff, Cindy Emore, Debra Carles

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

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.

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