



Eye on Zion

A Quarterly Newsletter for the People of Zion Lutheran Church

November-December-January
2023-2024

STAFF

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Pastor Joel Pancoast

Associate Pastor

Pastor Veronica Gould

Intern Pastor

Katie Elkin

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Ronda Buck—Sunday School

Alyssa Hart—Young Adult / Nourish

Pam Stevens—Sacred Space

Connecting Hearts Coordinator

Angie Elder

Director of Worship and Music

Noelle Bauman-Stucky

Organist / Praise Band Director

Neil Forsythe

Bell and Chimes Director

Thomas Chen

Accompanist / Collaborative Artist

Ryan Marvel

Office Manager

Lindsey Walter

Worship Technology Coordinator

Stig Oresjo

Bookkeeper

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Out of Time

Pastor Veronica Gould

This year at Zion, we are leaning into an “extended Advent” with our worship theme “Out of Time.”

Traditionally, the season of Advent is recognized in the four weeks leading up to Christmas. This year, we will begin our Advent observance on November 19, giving us six Sundays before Christmas (including Christmas Eve!).

In the early centuries of church history, the length of Advent varied; sometimes it was three weeks, sometimes six or seven, sometimes forty days. Since its first observation in the fourth century, the meaning of Advent has also changed.

In its earliest observation, Advent was associated with preparation for baptism. Later, it took on an eschatological meaning, as the church focused on the second coming of Christ. Today, we often speak of Advent in terms of waiting: waiting for Christmas and waiting expectantly for the presence of

Christ in our own lives.

This year, our worship theme for Advent “Out of Time” explores two senses of being out of time. Advent thrusts upon us the reality that time is limited. We run out of time in our own lives to reconcile, to prepare, to make a change. Yet even as we are running out of time, God is outside of time entirely. God’s infinite being and infinite patience cut through our fear as God enters human time to dwell with us: Emmanuel, God-with-us.

We celebrate that “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:8), a truth that stretches across and beyond time.

Whether you are entering this Advent season with joyful expectation or anxious anticipation, you are invited to take time to rest in this promise as we discover together what God is calling us to in *our* time.

Blessings on the journey.

Out of Time Worship Theme Schedule

November 19	Time is Relative—Advent Festival at 9:30 a.m.
November 26	In Our Time
December 3	Running Out of Time
December 10	Time Flies—Christmas Pageant at 10:45 a.m. Service
December 17	Dreamlike Time
December 21	Longest Night Service—7:00 p.m. at King of Glory
December 24	Out of Time—A Service of Lessons and Carols (regular Sunday morning worship times of 8:15 and 10:45 a.m.)
December 24	No Time
Christmas Eve	4:00 p.m. Family/Contemporary Service 6:00 p.m. Traditional Service 10:30 p.m. Eventide Service
December 31	The End Time is the Beginning—9:30 a.m. New Year's Eve Brunch Church

New Year's Eve Brunch Church

“The end time is the beginning.” That phrase could sound hopeful, threatening, confusing, comforting, or anything in between! However it sounds to you, “The End Time is the Beginning” is the final theme of our Advent-Christmas worship series, and YOU ARE INVITED! To church on New Year's Eve. To brunch on Sunday. To BOTH! For New Year's Eve (which is on a Sunday this year), you are invited to brunch church.

We will gather around the Word and a meal as we commemorate the end of a calendar year and marvel at God in our midst—through food, fellowship, laughter, and singing.

There will be ONE brunch church worship at 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, December 31.

Please bring a favorite breakfast or brunch dish to share! Hope to see you there!

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Music Ministry

Noelle Bauman-Stucky

Greetings, everyone. The season of waiting and celebration is upon us and with it a chance to focus our reflections inwardly as we spend more time inside our warm structures, and outwardly as we join in celebrating the season with others. As beautiful as this season can be, it can also bring stress on individuals and families stemming from issues like financial discomfort, housing struggles, familial disarray, or workload. Zion has historically been a place that focuses on the wide array of needs in our community. I have no doubt it will be the same this season as we provide kids with winter gear and Christmas presents, and share our joy and love with the community at large. Amongst all the hubbub, I always find peace within our walls and that peace goes with me into my daily life. I am looking forward to spending another Advent and Christmas season with you all.

Children's Music Ministry

Our children's choir has been hard at work preparing musical selections with their voices and with instruments! The members have impressed me with not only their coordination and willingness to try new things, but also their encouragement for one another. No matter the age, one can feel incredibly self-conscious when presenting music they have put time and energy into presenting. In rehearsals these kids are consistently stepping out of their comfort zones to move with the music and sing and play solos. They are also doing tremendous work on musical literacy and applying that to instruments. I am thrilled to work with such amazing children.

There are upcoming musical opportunities for kids! Through November and early December the Sunday School will be working on the Christmas pageant for December 10, which you can read

about in Pastor Veronica's newsletter entry on page 4.

Zion Chancel Choir

Last year King of Glory, Trinity Lutheran, and Zion Lutheran joined their choirs to share a piece at one another's services. We loved this so much we decided to do it again this year! The first combined choir Sunday will be November 19 at Trinity Lutheran. The service begins at 9:00 a.m. Choir members will also have the option of singing with the combined group at that evening's joint Thanksgiving service also at Trinity.

The Zion chancel choir will start working on music for the Advent and Christmas season in early November. In the past, a few congregational members have joined choir for this season to celebrate the meaningful music and celebratory occasion. If you are at all interested in attending rehearsals and singing with us for the Christmas Eve service, please contact me and I will prepare music for you and plan rehearsals with you in mind. We would love to celebrate this Christmas season with you as we raise our voices together.

Music Staff Search Outcome

Our congregation continues to be blessed with music directors who challenge, inspire, and teach us to grow in order to enhance the worship experience of all involved. Last June, we were informed of David Dunbar's resignation. Though our community was sad to lose his leadership, we are welcoming his continued work with the Rocky Mountain Chamber Singers when they perform at Zion. His new appointment as music director in Fort Collins has been a great fit for him and an opportunity he could not let pass. Word on the street is he will always miss us. When David shared his resignation, Pastor Joel and I were

Music Ministry continued from page 3.

headed out of town on separate extended trips. Time was of the essence and Lindsey Walter jumped straight into posting for the open positions while Pastor Veronica planned hymns for our traditional services. Erin Bachman not only took on planning and leading the praise team, but also headed the search committee for the new director consisting of Rod Braman, Eileen Huddle, Janie Lichtfuss, Amy Moore, Hannah Pancoast, Pastor Joel, Tom Robinson, and me. The committee members were essential in finding the right candidates for Zion.

The journey of the last three years caused the committee to have stability and longevity as high priorities in our candidates. There was one candidate whose persistence is deeply appreciated as he was one of our top three candidates in the past two searches and continues to show his assuredness in being with our church family.

Welcome Neil Forsythe to Zion's Staff

I am happy to welcome Neil Forsythe to our staff as our organist and praise band director. Neil has an incredible history of leading music in churches while holding almost every music ministry appointment on the list. We are blessed to have

his skill and musicality on the organ and his leadership and experience in the praise band. Neil is finally joining us here at Zion, but he has worked periodically in Colorado for many years. In his current position with Colorado Early Colleges Fort Collins, Neil excels as an adjunct professor and accompanist. He works with the choir and teaches piano and music appreciation. From 2005 to 2012, Neil worked in the Loveland and Lyons areas in education and music ministry, after which he moved to Iowa where he was a director of music and church organist for many years. His education took him from Pennsylvania's Temple University where he received his Bachelor of Music degree, and West Chester University where he studied music education, all the way to the California Institute of the Arts in Valencia, California, where he received his Master of Fine Arts degree with a major in keyboard studies. We are incredibly grateful Neil is here to share his gifts with Zion Lutheran Church.

With all of that I am thrilled to begin this season with all of you and our marvelous music staff. I am looking forward to sharing music and joy.

Christmas Pageant

Pastor Veronica Gould

On December 10, during the contemporary service (10:45 a.m.), the youth of Zion will bring the Christmas story to life with a joy-filled pageant full of our favorite biblical characters. The angels have waited millennia for this moment to occur; for the innkeeper, the night's events fly by; the townspeople of Bethlehem sleep through the moment entirely; and the animals have a different take on human urgency.

Throughout the pageant, we will celebrate the enduring promise that God can, does, and will show up in all sorts of moments in our lives. In

the moment of the incarnation, when Jesus was born, the timeless God reshapes the human and divine relationship for all time.

Rehearsals begin November 5 and continue through December 3 during the faith formation hour (9:30-10:30 a.m.). All youth are encouraged to participate, no experience required! There will be a dress rehearsal on the day of the pageant (December 10) at 9:30 a.m. Contact Ronda Buck, Noelle Bauman-Stucky, or Pastor Veronica if you are interested in participating or helping to make our program a success!

Noelle: A Reintroduction

Pastor Joel Pancoast

Members and Friends at Zion,

Noelle did such a beautiful job introducing Neil Forsythe as Zion's newest organist and praise band director, I want to introduce (or reintroduce) our newest chancel choir director and director of worship and music.

On behalf of the search committee and personnel committee, I am excited to let you know that Noelle Bauman-Stucky has agreed to take on both of those roles, in addition to her work as our children's music ministry director.

In order to make this fit with Noelle's schedule, we made some adjustments to her current work with children's music, as well as some of the expectations for her role as the director of worship and music. Since we have incredible staff in Ryan Marvel, Thomas Chen, and Neil Forsythe, Noelle will be able to take an occasional Sunday away, and she will continue to go on the amazing adventures that she and Bennett are able to take each summer. With her leadership and coordination, worship on these Sundays will go without a hitch.

Noelle joined the Zion staff in 2016, and as such she is now one of Zion's longest-standing members of staff. I am grateful for her dedication and hard work, and especially for the love and joy she shares with others through music and laughter. She has been such a gift to Zion, and I look forward to working with her in these new roles. When you see her, share your gratitude for her leadership, or maybe consider singing in the chancel choir under her direction!

Seasonal Concert with Pianist Ryan Marvel

December 10 Zion Lutheran Church Doors at 2:30, Concert at 3:00

Please join us for an afternoon of seasonal music as Ryan debuts his brand new album "Winter III," a collection of original arrangements of traditional carols and holiday favorites. This concert will also feature the talents of cellist Heidi Mausbach as she joins Ryan in performing his 'Winter Solstice Miniatures' for cello and piano.

Ryan will share stories and feature music from his other holiday albums. And who knows...maybe some singing? Join us in this beautiful setting for a wonderful afternoon of community and music.

Plenty of seating available; all tickets available at the door.
\$20 suggested donation per person.

Albums and Songbooks will be available for purchase.

More on Ryan: RyanMarvel.com



Internship Update

Intern Pastor Katie Elkin



It's hard to believe that I am already in the third month of my internship here at Zion! Since my very first day back in August, this community has made me feel welcomed, supported, challenged, and encouraged. I want to say a HUGE THANK YOU to each of you who has played a part in making my transition from Minnesota to Loveland so smooth. From hiking recommendations, to sharing favorite dining and coffee spots, to turning Zach Schairer's house into a home for me (and future interns), I am grateful for the hospitality of the people of Zion!

In my few short months here, I have already been gifted with many rich experiences through the life of this community. I have been able to teach confirmation, attend a Rocky Mountain Synod conference, visit Sky Ranch for the first time, preach, lead prayer practices as a part of adult faith formation, learn how to facilitate a stewardship campaign, lead Bible study, make pastoral care visits, lead Kids in Christ, share in many fellowship opportunities, and so much more!

Beyond the incredible ministerial opportunities I've already been a part of, I have also cherished informal moments of conversation and "life-sharing" with many of you. I can't wait for what the rest of the year holds!

As I look forward to the months ahead, I am excited to go deeper with my internship project! When I was applying for internship sites, Zion stuck out to me because of the bold claim of our vision statement:

"Through Christ, the complicated, difficult, and sometimes messy nature of gathering people of different perspectives and backgrounds are recognized and welcomed." The church is one place in our world where people with different—and sometimes conflicting—beliefs can still gather, be in dialog with one another, and rely upon God's love for the world as we figure out how to live in it together. The community at Zion has a history of practicing this type of loving dialog through adult forums, monthly Nourish dinners, and various training opportunities such as The Colossian Forum. Out of Zion's vision, the community history, and my personal belief in the transformative power of Christ in the midst of conflict, my internship project is coming together!

Right now, I am participating in Colossian Forum webinars and brainstorming what a similar venture could look like here at Zion. Maybe an adult forum on Sundays? Maybe a weeknight offering? Maybe something else?? Stay tuned for more information, and please don't hesitate to reach out if you have any questions, thoughts, or contributions for the early conceptions of my internship project!

Introducing the Prayground

Intern Pastor Katie Elkin

If you have been at Zion since before September, you may have noticed a change in the sanctuary. Right up front, next to the pulpit, there is a place that is comfortable, colorful, and filled with choruses of young voices. That's right, it's Zion's new prayground!

What is a prayground, you ask? A prayground is a place set apart for young worshipers and their families.



Zion's prayground is at the front of the sanctuary so that children can see what is happening during worship.

We know a few things about children: they learn by doing, they stay engaged when they can see what's going on, and they worship in their own age-appropriate ways. Our prayground is filled with age-appropriate materials (books, coloring pages, etc.) that will help the younger children of Zion learn how to worship. Our prayground is in the front of the sanctuary so that children can see what is happening during worship. They get a front-row seat to the liturgy, preaching, and music of our congregation.

A prayground fits well at Zion because we, as a congregation, value intergenerational spaces. And what's more intergenerational than all ages—from infants to octogenarians—sharing one sanctuary for worshiping our one God! As we embrace worship alongside Zion's children and families of all ages, you are invited to reimagine and renew your own practices of worship, as well. The nursery will still be available during both services for families who prefer that option. If you have any questions or anything that you would like to donate to enrich our prayground, please reach out to Intern Pastor Katie!

Christian Service in the Community Forum

Sunday, November 19, 12 p.m.

Zion's strategic plan for 2023 includes a greater commitment to serving in the community. As a church, we already have a rich tradition of service through ministries such as House of Neighborly Service, Community Kitchen, Alternatives to Violence, KidsPak, and more. However, after the pandemic, it has been difficult to renew the focus. In some cases, the agencies we work with have shifted. In other cases, volunteer interest, time, and energy have shifted. Through it all, many people still serve in many ways. The number of opportunities in this issue of the "Eye on Zion" alone are evidence of that.

This year, a Local Service Committee was created to help listen to congregational interest and passion and create a focused plan for service. In order to create listening opportunities, this committee will hold several service forums throughout the year. At these, the entire congregation is encouraged to attend to give feedback around where you would be most interested in serving our neighbors in need. Join us November 19 for a light lunch and conversation about service in our community.

It's TIME for Sunday School

Ronda Buck

Sunday School kickoff happened on Sunday, September 10, during faith formation time! We had a fantastic TIME welcoming all our Sunday School kiddos back from their summer breaks! Fun was had by all, starting with an exciting “get to know you” game and song, led by Pastor Veronica and other Sunday School volunteers. This was followed by a variety of yard games, picture taking, cookie decorating, and yummy watermelon and lemonade! Parents registered their children and everyone said good-bye to summer and hello to wonderful new adventures with old and new friends!

Elementary Sunday School is focusing on a new program called TIME Travelers! Stop by the Sunday School room and check out our TIME machine, where we visit areas that Jesus and the disciples wandered many years ago! Our TIME machine is no DeLorean, but it's all we had TIME (and money) for...hahahaha!

Middle schoolers are staying busy this season with confirmation twice a month, participating in Nourish monthly, and joining with the high schoolers once a month for fellowship and cooking/eating. Whew! That's a lot, but it's all they have TIME for.

High schoolers are continuing their tradition of monthly coffee chats at Loveland Coffee! And of course, fellowshiping with food and the middle schoolers on the fourth Sunday of each month.

Wow! Youth faith formation is certainly keeping busy! Please feel free to check in with any of our children and youth to talk about all our Sunday adventures! I'm sure they would all love to take the TIME to visit with you.



Zion youth enjoyed a yard game with huge balls despite the wind and chill as part of Sunday School kickoff.

2024-25 Registration for Thompson Valley Preschool

Thompson Valley Preschool (TVP), a part-time preschool program, offers affordable access to a high quality, early childhood educational program promoting school readiness skills, with a social emotional curriculum that is second to none.

TVP starts registration on February 1, 2024. The preschool offers:

- Preschool for children 3-4 years old (must be 3 by September 1)
- Prekindergarten for children 4-5 years old (must be 4 by October 1).

Contact us for a tour of the program at admin@thompsonvalleypreschool.org or 970-667-6552, and also visit our website www.thompsonvalleypreschool.org

Faith Formation Updates

Pastor Veronica Gould

Upcoming Youth and Family Events

- On November 19, all ages are invited to the Advent Festival and “Church New Year’s Party” at 9:30 a.m.
- On December 10, we will have our Christmas pageant in the morning at 10:45 a.m. and in the afternoon from 12:00-5:00 p.m., parents can enjoy an afternoon out while kids enjoy fun activities at the church. RSVP to Pastor Veronica or Ronda Buck for Parents Day Out).

Middle School

Confirmation retreat will be held November 10-12 in Fort Collins. Students will have opportunities to learn about other faith traditions and how to engage respectfully with our neighbors.

High School

- High school Friendsgiving will be at 5:00 p.m. on November 18. We will provide the turkey. RSVP to Pastor Veronica and sign up to bring or make a side dish. All friends are welcome to join!
- There will be a high school Christmas lock-in at Zion December 15-16.

Youth Gathering Registration

We have already begun registering for the 2024 ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans, Louisiana. All youth completing 8th grade through 12th grade in 2024 are invited to attend the youth gathering. For more information, contact Pastor Veronica.

Bella Notte Fundraiser

Be on the lookout for more information about the Bella Notte youth fundraiser. All proceeds from the fundraiser go to support Zion’s youth in faith formation. You can support this event by volunteering, donating, and coming out to enjoy a meal together with your church family.

Young Adults via Zoom

Every Sunday at 6:00 p.m., join online for a Zoom call to build connections wherever you are! Contact Angie Elder or Pastor Veronica for more information.

Any Age Adults

During the Advent and Christmas seasons at 9:30 a.m. on Sundays, we will have an adult education series on the Incarnation throughout church history. Travel through time as we learn how our spiritual ancestors celebrated the timeless truth of Christmas in word and song.

Save the Date

Zion Lutheran Church Annual Meeting

Sunday, January 21, 2024

12:00 p.m.

Join us for a light lunch provided by the council, as we celebrate the ministry that we have shared in 2023 and look forward to where God is calling us in mission together in 2024.

Confirmation Celebrated

Pastor Veronica Gould

On Reformation Sunday, we celebrated the confirmation of Gordon Kuhns and Modesto “Bruce” Gallegos-Lucero. In confirmation, they made a public affirmation of their faith, proclaiming their “yes” to the promises made at their baptism and taking on the responsibility of a life of faith in community. As we prayed for and blessed Gordon and Bruce, we reminded them that the promises of our baptismal covenant are really big promises, promises that we cannot keep alone. So as their faith family, please pray for them and support them as they continue their faith journey as confirmed members of Zion.

Gordon will continue to serve on Zion’s church council and share his gifts with his community through service, through his friendships, and through dedication to music and scouting. Bruce is looking forward to sharing his artistic gifts to help with designs for Loveland Lutheran Faith Formation and volunteering his time with Vacation Bible School (VBS) day camp again next year. Both Bruce and Gordon expressed their appreciation for and commitment to faith formation at Zion, through Sunday School, Sky Ranch, and VBS day camp.

Bruce’s confirmation verse is 2 Corinthians 5:17, “So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!” Gordon’s confirmation verse is Genesis 50:20, “Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good.” Both of these verses reminded me that in our lives of faith, we encounter hardships and challenges, but God is faithful and will never forsake us.



Gordon and Bruce celebrated their confirmation milestones on Reformation Sunday.



Young Adult Ministry

Alyssa Hart

Zion's young adult ministry group spans from any age post-high school to early thirties. If you or anyone you know are interested in joining, please let me know. All are welcome! My email is alyssa@zionloveland.com and I'd love to connect with you whether that's in our group outings or hanging out one on one.

This fall, we enjoyed testing our detective skills at an escape room in Loveland. Everyone enjoyed working together to solve the mysteries!

Our next event will be held the evening of Saturday, December 30, at a restaurant in Loveland. Stay tuned for more information as it gets closer to December!



Zion's young adults used their detective skills to solve the mystery and escape the room.

Loveland ELCA Lutheran Churches Joint Thanksgiving Worship

November 19 5:30 p.m.

Hosted by Trinity Lutheran Church
3333 Duffield Avenue, Loveland

Thanksgiving Pie Auction

Pie Fest and Pie Auction benefiting Habitat for Humanity immediately following worship.

If you are interested in bringing a pie for the auction, please sign up on the Sunday bulletin connection sheet insert.

The church with the least amount of money raised will get a pie thrown in their face(s).



At the 2022 pie auction, Pastor Deb Abbott and Pastor Chris Davis both took a pie to the face, but we raised over \$2,600 for Loveland Habitat for Humanity.



Sky Ranch Advent Retreat December 1-3

Advent is a season that is very much “out of time,” reflecting the urgency of the season as we await the coming of Christ and the disorientation of time in our lives.

Sky Ranch is a very special place that gifts its guests with an experience of being “out of time.” When you go to Sky Ranch, you experience the mystery and holiness of God; you soak up every moment surrounded by the solitude of creation; you enjoy the people God has brought together; and you forget the deadlines and routines of the world you have left behind.



Five Zion families participated in the first Sky Ranch Advent Retreat in 2016.

Preparing for Christmas can seem very frantic, but intentional Advent practices invite rest and recreation centered on God’s promise that all time is in God’s hands. If that sounds appealing, consider registering for the Sky Ranch Advent Retreat by calling the Sky Ranch office or registering online at skyranchcolorado.org/advent-retreat. The theme for this year’s retreat will be the Gifts of Advent: Love, Hope, Peace, and Joy. We will spend time in community as we worship, create, eat, and have fun together!

NEW Program: Paint & Pour with Sky Ranch

This retreat will center around the ways in which we, made in God’s image, are creative beings. This will be a time of community, rest, creativity, exploration, prayer, and much more. YOU are God’s beloved creation, invited into the act of creation by the very God who created all things.

SCHEDULE

9:00 a.m.—introductions and icebreakers	1:00 p.m.—guided painting begin
10:00 a.m.—Bible study: creativity	2:00 p.m.—prayer activity
11:30 a.m.—break	3:00 p.m.—free painting
Noon—lunch	4:00 p.m.—worship

COST

\$75 per participant (includes supplies, mimosas, lunch, and programming)
Registration deadline is Monday, November 27. To register, go to skyranchcolorado.org/paintandpour

DETAILS

Saturday, December 9
Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church
Fort Collins
9:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.

WHAT TO BRING

BYOB (bring your own beverage
(can be alcoholic or non)
Morning mimosas and lunch will
be provided, as will snacks and
all art supplies.

Thank you to Zion from Bekah Boatwright of Sky Ranch

Zion Family,

We are so incredibly grateful for the grant that helped us to support our family camp program this summer! Being able to offer help toward transportation to our speakers (who flew in five family members!) was truly a blessing. If you aren't familiar with our family camp program, it is a week of camp that is designed for all ages to enjoy together! Families enjoy a meaningful week of fun, fellowship, faith, and community up on the mountaintop, enhanced by the gifts and talents of our wonderful speakers. The program was so successful this summer that next summer we will be adding ANOTHER week of family camp! We hope to see some of you there!

Thank you for helping us to make this possible!

Bekah Boatwright

Youth and Outreach Program Director

Sky Ranch Lutheran Camp

Zion's Gifts and Endowment Committee approved \$1,000 to help bring family camp leaders to camp last summer. Thanks to the generosity of many Zion members past and present, we are able to provide ongoing ministry support far beyond our budgeted expenses, and this is just one example.

Sunday Lunch 'n' Learn with Intern Pastor Katie

Mark your calendars for January 7 at 12:00 p.m. for Zion's first Lunch 'n' Learn of the new year!

You are invited to join me in wondering "what God might be up to amid the seismic changes the church and our culture are undergoing." You are invited to bring your questions, doubts, convictions, and hopes as we explore what faithful innovation could look like in the life of this community.

Beginning on January 7 and continuing roughly every other Sunday, I will be hosting a lunch and learn on the book **Leading Faithful Innovation: Following God into a Hopeful Future** by Dwight Zscheile, Michael Binder, and Tessa Pinkstaff.



Leading Faithful Innovation offers a practical, hands-on approach to a process that culminates in the hope that comes from following the Spirit.

Light refreshments will be provided.

If you need assistance purchasing the book, please contact the church office!

Northern Colorado Youth Shelter Coming Soon

Pastor Joel Pancoast

As the cost of housing increases and the availability of affordable housing decreases in our communities, the number of people experiencing homelessness grows exponentially. Unfortunately, this reality hits children and youth. According to The Matthews House, an agency out of Fort Collins that works with youth and families experiencing this devastating reality, 8.95 percent of Larimer County youth age 16 and older slept somewhere other than their home in the past 30 days. Thompson School District has identified over 400 youth as unaccompanied and homeless. Currently, the infrastructure aimed at alleviating housing insecurity in Northern Colorado predominantly caters to the needs of adults, leaving a void in assistance for our younger community members. Without basic needs being met, students are not able to learn and grow.

To address the issues, between 2018-2020 the Thompson School District held conversations and workgroups with community partners sharing concerns about unaccompanied youth. The largest barrier to a solution identified was the lack of a physical building, but when the Early Childhood Education Center across the street from Zion's building merged with three other schools to form the new Peakview Academy, the school district put together a proposal to create a youth shelter in that location, receiving \$4.7 million in state funding for the project, and Larimer County provided \$1.5 million!

The new facility will be owned by the Thompson School District and operated by The Matthews House. It is scheduled to open in fall 2024, and will welcome around 25 youth every night, plus 15-20 drop-in guests. It is the first youth shelter built in the last 20 years in Colorado, with only three other similar shelters existing in Boulder, Denver, and Colorado Springs. In addition to safe and secure shelter, the youth shelter will offer the following services:

- Case management including family reunification for youth under 18
- Health services—physical and mental
- Employment services
- Nutritious meals and snacks
- Clothing and personal hygiene items
- Case management and support services
- Educational support and tutoring
- Mental health counseling and emotional support
- Life skills workshops
- Recreation and leisure activities.

This is a special opportunity for our community, for youth in the Thompson School District, and for Zion's mission to *share God's abundance together to transform lives through the love of Jesus*. Both the school district and The Matthews House executive director have been in touch with leaders at Zion to invite our participation and help, and while we do not currently know what that means for us, the possibilities are almost endless. Stay tuned for more information. In the meantime, if you are interested in supporting the shelter financially or receiving information as the shelter develops, contact the church office to find out how to get onto The Matthews House online mailing list.

SafeLot Starting November

Pastor Veronica Gould

...that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. —PHILIPPIANS 1:6

As I write this, we are planning for final interviews to determine the guests who will be staying in Zion's parking lot with the SafeLot ministry. Please join us in prayer for these individuals and families as winter approaches and they are taking shelter in their cars. We are preparing to open the lot to approved guests in the month of November, for one month at a time. Every guest will work with a case worker through Guiding Connections to support their transition to more permanent housing solutions. SafeLot is a shared ministry between Zion, King of Glory, and St. Spyridon; the program will be housed on alternating months at Zion and King of Glory.

Many have asked how they can support SafeLot. We have a great need for lot hosts to serve for a week at a time as a supportive presence onsite or offsite by taking phone calls, responding to emergencies, and monitoring the parking lot for cleanliness and safety. We also have a variety of volunteer opportunities on Tuesday nights, including providing and sharing meals with guests, monitoring shower access, and washing towels and sheets.

If you are unable to be onsite but would like to support SafeLot, you can make a donation online to help provide welcome kits and other essential supplies. For more information, or to sign up to volunteer, please contact the church office. Thank you for your support!

So many people have already poured their time, energy, and resources into this ministry, and we want to thank them. Special thanks to Linda Breen, Jacob Kuhns, Ruth Sprain, and the SafeLot planning team for all of their work and vision.



The former Thompson Valley School District Early Childhood Education Center will be remodeled to become the northern Colorado youth shelter that provides Zion with another opportunity for community outreach.

Among Members and Friends

At Rest in Our Father's House

John Boose who died July 27, 2023, and whose memorial service was August 12, 2023, at Zion.

Irene Blehm who died February 15, 2023, and whose memorial service was September 13, 2023, at Allnutt Funeral Service.

Irma Geidel who died August 7, 2023, and whose memorial service was September 23, 2023, at Resthaven Funeral Home.

Mary Sue, mother of Marla Heydt

Victoria, friend of Anita Turner-Steele

Dot, sister-in-law of Gwen Boswell

Joyous Celebrations of New Birth

Rhys (Reese) Monson, great-grandson of John and Lillian Monson

Scarlett Kalra, granddaughter of Ron and Sarah Christensen

Dru, daughter to Kellian and Emilee LaMonda and granddaughter of Don and Resa Mai

Aiden, grandson of Corey and Deb Steine

Amelia Caroline, daughter to Jacob and Elle Norton, granddaughter of Jami Juergensen and great-granddaughter of Dan and Linda Juergensen

Joyous Celebrations of Baptism

Aiden Clapp

Madyn Jane Cale

Cherie Lucero

Dru LaMonda

Thank you, folks, for doing what you do

Thank you to our financial secretaries, Eileen Huddle and Scott Sprain, who each week diligently deposit our offerings and keep accurate records.

Thank you to our baristas, Larry Huddle and Scott Sprain, who brew our coffee every Sunday morning.

Thank you to our rock-star altar guild volunteers, Amy Brauner, Jewel Claytor, Teresa Majeski, and Elaine Nichols, who keep our communion wine refreshed and bread baked.

Your cards were so comforting when I arrived home after the loss of my mother. Knowing your thoughts and prayers were there for me meant so much.

Marla Heydt

Connecting Hearts Thank You

I would like to take a moment "Out of Time" to say thank you to the amazing volunteers at Zion who use some of their time to care for others.

Thank you to the home communion ministers who share the Lord's Supper, prayer, and fellowship each month with those who are unable to come to worship in person: Pastor David Barber, Amy Brauner, Cindy Brusko, Harriet Colton, Norm and Jan Einertson, Mary Harris, Cindy Kurtz, Janie Lichtfuss, Elliott and Kathy Pancoast, Joanne Sterkel, and Phyllis Zimmerman.

Thank you to the care connection callers who call our home-centered members to check in and for meaningful conversation: Harriet Colton, Florence Doksansky, Janice Ehlers, and Janie Lichtfuss.

Thank you to our Stephen Ministers who currently have care receivers with whom they meet weekly to provide a listening ear, companionship, and care: Catherine Glaser, Will Reents, and Bonnie Schowalter.

Thank you to each and every one of you for sharing the love of Jesus!

Among Members and Friends

Pastor Joel, Lindsey, Stig, and everyone who helped with the service,

Thank you so much for all you did and the care you showed around my dad's funeral service. Everything was perfect and so many people commented how much it meant. None of it could have happened without you! I think we honored and celebrated a great man and his life. So many details and thought were put into it, and you all made it so easy for us.

*With deep appreciation,
Kristy Harris*

Zion,

Thank you for making Aiden's baptism so special. It meant a lot to my family to have him baptized here at Zion where my grandparents started attending in 1968 and where my parents were married and where my brother and I were baptized and confirmed. Thank you also to the Huffsmiths for building such a beautiful chest and to Zion for filling it with such special gifts.

*Sincerely,
Taylor, Alyssa, and Aiden Clapp*

Thank You Letters to Zion

- October 16, 2023—From Loveland's Community Kitchen for a donation of \$300.

Dear Friends at Zion,

Thank you for your hospitality this weekend, welcoming us to worship with you! Thank you also for your generous support for our ministry and your recent benevolence gift. Your partnership is vital in sustaining our work with students in Greeley, and we thank you for your support!

*Grace and Peace,
Pastor Monica*

To the Zion Lutheran Scholarship Committee,

Thank you for considering me and selecting me to be a candidate for this scholarship award. Scholarships have made college significantly more affordable, and I hope many others get the opportunity to receive this scholarship as well.

Bailey Vrem

Dear Zion Lutheran Scholarship Committee,

I am honored to have been selected as a recipient of the Distinguished Disciple Award. I am extremely thankful for donors such as yourselves who invest in college students and help us achieve our goals. God has an amazing future planned for me, and you have allowed me to continue on my path.

*Thanks,
Autumn Vrem*

Gratitude for Zion's Prayer Shawl Ministry

Thank you to the lady who sent us a prayer shawl with our neighbor. We are new residents, and I have only met you a few times. I am so happy with this kind thoughtfulness as well as the talent and kindness of the group who made this beautiful shawl. I do this kind of work, but I've never made one for myself so it is truly a gift to me. It has taken me 3 months to almost finish my rehab after our car accident, and your prayers will certainly speed my healing.

Thank you for your thoughtfulness, kindness, and generous heart. The prayer shawl and your encouraging words meant a lot to me when I lost my job. Thank you for your prayers while I weigh my options.

Thank you, Lindsey!

Florence Doksansky

At Zion, we are so blessed with wonderful staff! And we show our appreciation in many ways. One person I feel I need to personally thank today—and all though the year—is our wonderful office manager, Lindsey Walter. It seems that I’m always asking for her help: “please put in an announcement of the blood drives, please make bookmarks for the blood drives, please make posters for the movie the PUBLIC, please help me with the names on my care calling list, please put in an announcement about Pastels on 5th, please announce our drive for Alternatives to Violence” and much much more! Recently my bridge club that had met for 25 years at the Episcopal church was looking for a new home; Lindsey facilitated our meeting at Zion the very next day. While our church lets the community use its building for free, the bridge group (run by Zion member Kathy Hume) still takes a freewill offering that we hope helps with the HVAC bill.



Zion’s office manager, Lindsey Walter, is the glue that holds us together on many levels.

It seems that weekly Lindsey is helping me, and I’m sure helping all of us in some important way! And she never says no or lets me bring her a gift!

Lindsey, the old saying that some people are the glue that holds things together, definitely applies to you! I wish there were better ways to say it but THANK YOU SO VERY MUCH for all of your support and assistance!



Zion provided snacks and drinks to grateful Peakview Academy teachers as they set up their classrooms for the new school year.

Lindsey Walter is key to Zion’s successful partnership with Peakview Academy

Thanks to Lindsey, the people of Zion are successful and valued in their outreach to the students and staff at Peakview Academy, meeting their specific needs. Lindsey is the point person whom the school contacts requesting our support. Lindsey is the one who communicates to us the ways in which we can participate to ensure meaningful and significant results that benefit the staff but more heartwarming is the benefit to the children, especially those in need of a winter jacket, a pair of boots, or a gift at Christmas time.

Peakview Academy at Conrad Ball

Pastor Joel Pancoast

For well over a decade, Zion has been a strong supporter of our neighborhood schools. Though God is completely outside of our experience of time and place, God has placed us in a specific time, with specific people to serve and join together in community. For many years, Monroe Elementary School made up part of those people and community, so for many years we built relationships with children, teachers, and staff there to let them know how much we care. Over the years, you could find members of Zion helping one-on-one in classrooms, others working in small groups, others who played games on the playground during lunch recess, and still others who shelved books in the library or helped with other administrative or organizational tasks.

When Monroe merged with several other schools to create Peakview Academy at Conrad Ball, the teachers were sad about the possibility that our partnership might not continue. Though Peakview may not be immediately across the street from the church building, it is still only a few blocks away and in our neighborhood, and there is great need for your help! God has called us to serve for just such a time and place as this. You may already know that we have helped provide food for back-to-school night and parent/teacher conferences, as well as collected winter gear for students. In addition to these ways of helping, there are weekly opportunities.

Classroom Volunteer (1-2 hours per week during the school day)

Many of the teachers can use an extra hand in the classroom. It may be reading one-on-one with a student, working with small groups while the teacher works with another small group, or grading papers, shelving books in the library, or even putting up bulletin boards. We can help the amazing teachers at Peakview in many ways, and in turn enjoy the amazing experience helping out in the classroom and knowing that you are changing lives.

Continued on page 20.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to the 60 coats and boots collected for students at Peakview in need of winter wear.



Zion provided soup, crackers, bread, veggies, fruit, and desserts to 100 Peakview Academy teachers and staff the nights of parent/teacher conferences. They LOVED it all and were grateful.

Peakview Academy at Conrad Ball continued from page 19.

Playground Buddy (1 day a week during lunch recess)

We are looking for people, especially men, who would be interested in hanging out on the playground with the kids during lunch recess once a week. Some of the kids have not had the opportunity to learn cooperative play. These volunteers have the opportunity to reach out to a child who is on the outside, or start up a game of soccer or tag while getting to know kids.

After School Kids Club

(1 hour per week after school for 3-4 weeks whenever this works with your schedule)

Many adults have talents or hobbies that can be shared with children and youth: cooking, sewing, latch hook, carving, painting, . . . you name it! If you are interested, talk with Pastor Joel and we can set up a once-a-week opportunity for a small group of kids to learn with you. You determine the number of kids that you are comfortable teaching. Pastor Joel can help find additional adults to be with you to help as you teach.

There are so many ways to make a difference in the lives of the children at Peakview. The amazing thing is that often it is we who are changed for the better as we reach out to make a difference in our community. If you are interested in helping at Peakview in any way, let us know! If you are already helping over there, we would love to know, so send us a note saying when and how you are helping. The teachers and staff are always so appreciative of the ways we serve, but the real rewards are ours.



Pastor Joel (pictured in the back row on the right) was invited to the ribbon-cutting ceremony for Peakview Academy with Principal Black, students and faculty, school board members, city council members, and state representatives.

God's Work. Our Hands.

Pastor Joel Pancoast

Though God exists beyond time, God is busy within time. God meets us, challenges us, blesses and shapes us, all for the sake of continuing to create and reform the world and human relationship. Each year in September, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) congregations all over the country witness to a God of blessing and love by being the hands, feet, and mouthpiece of God. This year, September 10 was God's Work. Our Hands. day in the ELCA. The three congregations of Loveland spread throughout northern Colorado to engage in different opportunities of service and advocacy. It was a rainy day, so two of our projects were postponed, but still we were sent into the community for seven different service opportunities. Thank you to everyone who participated in this meaningful ministry of service and learning!



Peter Severson, director of Lutheran Advocacy Ministry Colorado, talked about how our faith intersects public policy and encouraged letter writing campaigns to elected leaders.

One group worked at the Community Kitchen warehouse.



Another group packed 500 homeless care kits with food and hygiene items to be shared around the community.



Pastor Samm Melton-Hill shared about the ministry of New Beginnings, a worshipping community in Denver Women's Correctional Facility, and the group made greeting cards that inmates can send to loved ones.

Reclaim: Embody, Embolden, and Liberate

A Report on a Recent ELCA Event

September 14-17, 2023

Dr. George E. Stevens

I attended a lively, informative, and timely ELCA event entitled, “***Reclaim: Embody, Embolden, and Liberate***” held from September 14 through September 17. The Reclaim Event was “A curated gathering for people of African Descent of all ages and gender identities brought to us by African Descent Ministries.”

Among my personal takeaways were that recent developments including dramatic upheavals caused by our economy, inflation, a dramatic increase in the price of essentials such as gasoline, food, and housing and benign elements such as technological advancements have played havoc with our lives. Add COVID to the mix. Institutions and people lost ground economically. All of these elements have had a profound impact upon the ELCA. The level of giving at many churches has declined. Many members who previously attended services in person now rely upon videoconferencing such as Skype, Zoom, and similar tools. Technology as reflected in today’s phones provides its own entertainment and distractions. Getting that core group of youngsters who served as the seed corn of our churches for decades, if engaged are so engaged elsewhere, not the churches. Acquiring and supporting staff and programs as well as resource allocation represent additional challenges.¹



Dr. George E. Stevens

The planners of this program took a longer-term view which recognized that the American culture as we know has experienced dramatic changes during recent decades. Conference leadership noted the impact of more dramatic changes in recent years, given Supreme Court rulings that shifted the status quo regarding voting rights and protections, possession and types of firearms, access to housing, the ability to have an abortion, fundraising by office seekers, and a college or university’s ability to include Race as a factor in making admission decisions. There was some discussion of what some people perceive as a Congress that is fighting among themselves and engaging in “Cultural Wars” rather than addressing economic and financial needs of our country. The program creators recognized the important need to have people of African Descent “reclaim our space.”

Our assignment as attendees was to build upon well-established community traditions and principles like ***Umoja***, ***Sankofa***, and ***Ubuntu***. The African Descent community thrives most when gathered to address such principles: 1) ***Umoja*** (Unity)—to strive for and maintain unity in the family, community, nation, and race; 2) ***Sankofa*** (Knowledge Retrieval)—to bring past knowledge into the present then use that knowledge to make positive progress; and 3) ***Ubuntu*** (Humanity)—a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity.

Reclaim: *Embody, Embolden, and Liberate* continued from page 22.

Program Activities

A typical program day included *Praise and Worship*, a *Morning Keynote Address*, *Workshops*, and an *Intergenerational Dialogue*. Every worship service took place with uplifting music that had people on their feet singing along, or in place tapping their feet, with many playing individual musical instruments. Our keynote speakers, Rev. Jazmine L. Brooks of Macedonia AME Church in Accomac, Virginia, and Pastor Solomon Missouri of Invitation AME Zion Church in Snow Hill, North Carolina, were both outstanding orators who delivered moving and powerful messages. The four workshops covered the following topics: “*Push Pause: Ask the Question*,” “*Metaphors for a Better World*,” “*Where Have All the Lay Leaders Gone?*” “*Reframing sex...exploring sexuality and spirituality*,” “*The Power of Narratives*,” and “*Stewardship Matters*.” All the speakers were impressive. However, the most informative session for me was the “*Men in Ministry Cohort*.” This was an intentional cohort inviting Candidates for Ministry, First Call, and Lay African Descent men in ministry. I attended this session which was led by a bishop and at least two others who are ordained ministers. Many questions were posed, discussions held, and answers provided. The group of about a dozen African Descent men shared stories, worked to establish relationships, and sought to become informed learners.

Intergenerational Dialogues

Our group was brought together in an effort to grow across generations, to discuss issues of concern that cut across generations, come back together, and share takeaways. Many generations, from the *Silent Generation* (born 1925-1945) to *Generation X* (born 1980-1994), were represented and participated making the event truly intergenerational. Important messages came through, including 1) the church’s need for healthy and whole preachers and teachers; financial professionals; technical support; attracting, engaging, and equipping young adults; and providing culturally relevant approaches to the Word; and 2) The need to create a toolkit for ministry as we muddle through a devastating and continuing pandemic and climate change with its profound effects upon our world.²

¹The challenge of attracting young members is not ours alone. The Boy Scouts of America/Scouting BSA, is facing a similar challenge regarding attracting Cub Scout age members and their parents to that organization. Other youth organizations are subject to the same challenge with youth focused on the other gender, technology, or sports.

²This document includes my personal observations but also draws quite a bit upon materials distributed to Reclaim participants throughout the course of the event.

I thank Pastor Joel Pancoast for making me aware of the very lively, informative, and timely ELCA program. I am delighted that I was given the opportunity to attend. I met and talked with many participants—people from all over the country and who contribute in so many ways to their church and other churches elsewhere.

In closing, I would be happy to discuss the event as well as answer any questions people have about the event, program, content, or its purpose. I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to participate.

Appointed to the Valparaiso University Guild Board

Janie Lichtfuss

A very long time ago, I was a student at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana. It was very apparent that there was a large organization working for the university. There were scholarships, and there were renovations done in many buildings on campus. This was a very active organization, and I wanted to be a part of it. When I graduated, I joined the Valparaiso University Guild. The guild was made up of 3,000 women working in chapters around the country that found many and varied ways to support the university.

We lived in Boulder at the time, and I organized the Boulder chapter of the guild. Through the years I served on about every committee possible, both in our local chapter and in the national organization. I was elected president of the national organization, and I visited many of the chapters around the country. Fortunately, I liked to travel and fly! As president of the guild, I also served as a member of the University Board of Directors (the only woman member). After my term as president of the guild, I always continued in the Boulder chapter and supported the university in any way possible.

Then one day at our home in Boulder, I received a phone call from the president of the university, Alan Harre. Can you imagine my surprise when he asked if I would be willing to move to Valparaiso in order to take the position of executive director of the guild? Yes, that is the only time we left Colorado after having moved here in 1961.

During my time as executive director, I organized a very large event that I hoped would not only raise money for the guild and the university, but would bring many people of different ages and

interests together in this endeavor. This was the Guild Run. After all, we were used to the Boulder Boulder event so I was hopeful for this to be successful. In fact, this was a very successful event and was repeated for a number of years.



Janie Lichtfuss

I also established the guild office endowment, giving individuals the opportunity to be involved in the support of the office, taking the expense out of the university budget.

I received the Filia Lucias Award, the highest award given by the guild.

Now, we fast forward from 1995 to 2023 with the ringing of another phone at my home in Loveland. The lady on the other end introduced herself as the leader of the guild and her first question was “Janie, how do you feel about the guild?” I tried to explain to her that the guild would always hold an important place in my heart. Then her next question: “Would you consider being a member of the guild board?” I about fell out of my chair. While I wondered if my 89-year-old ideas would fit in today, I also knew I could probably not travel to Valpo for meetings. She assured me I would be able to attend meetings via Zoom! Ah technology!

Well, the result of information gathering, much deliberation and much, much prayer, I have been appointed as a member of the board for the Valparaiso University Guild—another event in the life of a member at Zion, Janie Lichtfuss.

Women's Retreat

Angie Elder

Twenty-three women enjoyed the fresh mountain air, learning, and fellowship together at the annual Zion Women's Retreat at the YMCA in Estes Park, October 20-22. The theme was "Nothing Wasted: God uses the stuff you wouldn't" and we explored how God uses all of our life story—the ups and the downs—to draw us into a deeper relationship with Him. Many participants completed a weaving project to illustrate God's constant presence and love in their lives.

It was a Spirit-filled weekend for all!



Back row (standing L to R): Catherine Glaser, Florence Doksansky, Sarah Gall, Amy Moore, Carleen Blake, Cindy Kurtz, Kathy Reents, Jami Juergensen, Kristin Otteson, Desi Boyce, and Amy Black.

Middle row (seated L to R): Angie Elder, Kathy Pancoast, Jan Einertson, Susan Wallen, Tracey Klammer, Linda Juergensen, and Peggy Klammer.

Front row (seated L to R): Pastor Veronica Gould, Pastor Sonja Pancoast, Tyne Klammer, Maddie Elder, and Intern Pastor Katie Elkin.



We are blessed to have participants of all ages; pictured here are Kathy Pancoast and Maddie Elder walking to dinner.



Many completed a weaving project.

Out of Time for Peace in the Holy Land

Pastor Joel Pancoast

On October 7, the terrorist organization Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel, throwing the Middle East and the rest of the world into turmoil. As American media, political ties with Israel as long-standing allies, and religious perspectives all try to make sense of the situation and our response to it, it is important to see the issue as more complicated than we are most often led to believe. The issue is much, much more complicated than most of us will ever understand. For many “Eye on Zion” readers, this may be a controversial article, but I encourage you to consider that more than one thing can be correct.

Hamas is a terrorist organization that engaged in absolute evil, killing, and injuring thousands of innocent lives and taking hostages. However, the decades leading to this situation and Israel’s immediate response that also killed thousands of innocent civilians added to a humanitarian crisis.

Additionally, it is important to draw a distinction between the political nation of Israel and the religious expression of Judaism. To make a statement against the violence is not to be antisemitic, it is to long for peace for all people—but especially for the innocent—that seems impossible, out of time that we are currently living in.

This short article and the accompanying newsletter (Eye on Zion pages 28-31) from Pastors Meghan and Gabi Aelabouni will not provide answers, but I hope it will allow you to realize there are many more innocent lives caught in the crossfire than we are often led to believe.

Pastors Meghan and Gabi were pastors at Trinity Lutheran Church in Fort Collins, and now serve as ELCA missionaries in Jerusalem, working

closely with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land. Gabi is a Palestinian Christian, having grown up in the Galilee region. Their words and their experience will give you a firsthand experience of those caught in the crossfire of war and violence, representing a minority voice that is often not heard in the media or even in the most prominent Christian messages.

I am grateful to have shared pilgrimages to the Holy Land with two different groups from Zion, and I hope any of them would be able to share both how complicated life in that land is, and how loving and peaceful the people are, whether Israeli or Palestinian, Jewish, Muslim, or Christian. It is perhaps the Palestinian Christian community living in Israel that most often suffers the most. They represent the smallest group of people there, and they are rapidly decreasing in number and voice. Hamas does not represent them, nor do they represent the majority of Palestinians, yet we are often led to believe that they are one and the same.

I am reminded of words that Pastor Mitri Raheb, a Lutheran pastor who is also a Palestinian Christian, once said when I heard him speak. He said that what we call the Holy Land is made holy because of the places



"Peace" in the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed before he was arrested.

where Jesus and many ancestors of faith have walked, and yet the land there has never known peace. So what is holy about that land? It is the people—past, present, and future—who carry and who live the message of peace and love.

Out of Time for Peace in the Holy Land continued from page 26.

I invite you to join me in prayers for Israel and Palestine:

- We pray for an end to violence.
- We pray for the many innocent lives lost, Jewish, Muslim, and Christian.
- We pray for leaders around the world, but especially Israel and Palestine, to have the will to work for peace against all odds.
- We pray for Christians in the Holy Land, especially for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, for the ELCA.
- We pray for a deeper understanding of the violence for Americans and others around the world.

A Statement from Bishop Eaton on the Conflict in the Holy Land

10/26/2023 5:30:00 PM

Dear church,

The ELCA's commitments call on us to denounce unequivocally any attacks — past, present or future — by any party that lead to civilians becoming victims. Our hearts are with all those who have been killed or injured, and with their families and friends.

With an anticipated ground invasion, the most urgent need is for an immediate cease-fire to allow humanitarian aid to reach Gazans. Our advocacy as a church continues, guided by our long accompaniment of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and our commitments as a church to peace, justice, and ecumenical and interreligious dialogue and collaboration.

In these days of continued grief and distress over the horrific attack by Hamas on Israelis and the largely indiscriminate Israeli military response affecting civilians in Gaza, we lament with all who mourn and live in fear.

We believe that God is the one who makes "wars to cease to the end of the earth" (Psalm 46:9).

In Christ,



The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

[Elca.org/News-and-Events/8208](https://elca.org/News-and-Events/8208)

Go to elca.org (under News and Events) for a video message from Bishop Eaton regarding the conflict in the Holy Land.

Go to rmselca.org for a message from Pastor Meghan and Pastor Gabi addressed to the people of the Rocky Mountain Synod. Listed under

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NOTES FROM JERUSALEM

October 2023

Gabi and Meghan Aelabouni, ELCA missionaries to the Holy Land



The old city empties as visitors leave and residents mourn, and wait

WAR IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

**ROOTS OF VIOLENCE,
ROOTS OF PEACE**



REALITIES ON THE GROUND

Since the Hamas attack on southern Israel on October 7, and during the ongoing Israeli siege of Gaza, the realities on the ground speak to the urgent need for ceasefire, and for solutions to the underlying issue of the occupation of Palestine. Palestinian churches like the ELCJHL, and partners like the ELCA, have a crucial role to play.

(More on pg. 2-3)

FAMILY UPDATES AND THANKS



Our family remains safe at home in Jerusalem, accompanying our ELCA companions, especially the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Holy Land. (More on our family life during the current situation on pg. 4)

**“WHAT IS THE
ELCA DOING?”
“WHAT IS IT LIKE
FOR YOUR FAMILY?”**

ROOTS OF VIOLENCE, ROOTS OF PEACE

REALITIES ON THE GROUND

>>> OCTOBER 7, 2023

On the morning of October 7, our family awoke to the news that Hamas fighters had broken through the separation walls of Gaza and viciously attacked several nearby Israeli communities as well as a desert music festival. Throughout the next few days, the death toll would rise, and it would become clear that almost 200 hostages had been taken into Gaza. As the Israeli military began a brutal campaign of retribution, we have felt the cloud of anger, grief, and fear hanging heavily over this land. Yet when many Western media referred to this attack as “unprovoked,” many of us here in the Holy Land shook our heads. While the targeting of civilians by Hamas is indefensible, we know very well that October 7 is not the beginning of the story of Gaza, or of Palestine/Israel, that led us to this terrible day and these terrible weeks of violence and war.

>>> THE STORY OF GAZA

The story of Gaza is part of the larger story of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. This small strip of land, completely enclosed and controlled by the Israeli military, contains 140 square miles of land with 2.3 million residents (by way of comparison, it is twice the size of Washington, D.C., with 170% more population density). It is estimated that half of Gaza's population is descended from Palestinians forced out of their homes and villages during and after the 1948 *nakba* (catastrophe) that accompanied the establishment of the state of Israel. For more than 75 years, Israel has occupied both the West Bank and Gaza, and has complete control over daily life for Palestinians, restricting freedom of movement and access to clean water, electricity, fuel, internet, and all passage of materials (and people) in and out. Like the West Bank, Gaza has no airport, no seaport, no border it controls, and is not permitted to have a recognized military. Gazans must apply for permits to leave Gaza in order to seek work or medical care not available inside; and permits can be denied at any time, for any reason - even if the applicant is undergoing chemotherapy or dialysis. Gazans, regardless of personal history, are therefore treated as suspicious persons (or criminals) and denied human rights simply because of who they are. Thus, Gaza is often called “the largest open-air prison in the world.”

Due to low life expectancy, **half of Gaza's population are children**. Their entire lives have been defined by total occupation, punctuated by bombings that kill scores of civilians and destroy homes, businesses, and roads in the name of Israeli security. Already in this two weeks of war, the death toll for Gazans has far outweighed that of the 1,400 Israeli civilians killed on Oct. 7: more than 4,000 Gazans killed (at least 1500 of whom are children and 1,000 are women), 13,000 injured, 1,000 missing, and 1 million displaced. As we write this, the Palestinian Christian community is reacting to two church-based disasters: the airstrike on the Anglican Episcopal Al-Ahli Hospital (a partner of the Lutheran World Federation through Augusta Victoria Hospital) on Oct. 17, which killed hundreds sheltering there, and another Israeli air strike that destroyed the gathering hall of the oldest Christian church in Gaza, the Greek Orthodox Saint Porphyrius Church on Oct. 20, which was also being used as a shelter, causing dozens of deaths. According to international human rights law, collective punishment and the military targeting of civilians and civilian infrastructure is illegal.

None of this is to excuse what happened on Oct. 7. But it does help to explain why some Gazans are regrettably motivated to turn to violence, convinced that it is the only way out of occupation. (Consider that in a 2018-2019 weekly nonviolent protest by Palestinians on Gaza's border, Israeli snipers killed 266 protesters and injured another 30,000). In recent years, Israel's increasingly rightwing government has shown no interest in working toward a political solution to end the occupation. No wonder that, although every Palestinian we know condemns the killing of civilians, many shared images of a humble bulldozer breaking through the walls of Gaza to let its people go free.

The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote that “peace is not the absence of tension but the presence of justice.” The prophet Jeremiah cautioned the same: “They have treated the wound of my people carelessly, saying ‘peace, peace’ when there is no peace” (Jeremiah 6:14). Much of the Western world has operated under the false assumption that the problem in the Holy Land is an interpersonal problem of religious hatred, and that both sides simply need to set aside internal prejudices and come to the table to make peace. But the problem in the Holy Land is not primarily about religion. It is about the systematic displacement and occupation of a people with limited resources and power by another people with tremendous power, military strength, and the support of the most powerful nations in the world. Only justice can lead to true peace and security for Israel and Palestine. Only ending the occupation can create that justice.



FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS

SUMUD AND THE PALESTINIAN CHURCH

>>> HOPE IS WHAT WE DO TODAY

In late September and early October, we were blessed to participate in two conferences in Bethlehem: one focused on theological dialogue between Christian theologians from Palestine and India, and one that brought international scholars together to discuss “Land, Culture, and People.” These holy conversations focused on the intersections between Palestinian struggles and those of Dalit or tribal Indians, Black and Indigenous Americans, and many others. They also lifted up the power that marginalized people have to resist being dehumanized and erased: the power to remember the stories of their people and connection to their land; the power to create art, scholarship, and joy; the power to create a future *now*. The Arabic word for this is **SUMUD** (soo-mood), which means steadfastness or perseverance. Palestinians embrace and embody sumud as a form of “resistance through existence.” For our Lutheran partners in the ELCJHL, sumud takes the form of education, health care, environmental and gender justice, youth and Deaf ministry, and much more. As ELCJHL pastor and theologian Mitri Raheb says, “hope is what we do today.”

>>> ELCA RESPONSES

Our family remains safe in Jerusalem, continuing to accompany the ELCJHL during this difficult time and to update our colleagues and siblings in Christ in the ELCA about the realities of the situation on the ground. However, the ELCA made the difficult decision to evacuate our five YAGM (Young Adults in Global Mission) volunteers and our YAGM Country Coordinators (Pastors Adam and Jordan Miller-Stubbendick, with their two young sons) back to the U.S. This decision was not taken lightly, but in light of the instability of the situation and the disruption of the YAGM program due to the total closure of checkpoints to the West Bank (where the YAGM have their placements), as well as our desire to accompany our Palestinian partners by not placing the additional burden of hosting the volunteers during this stressful and anxious time.

SUMUD: FOR JUSTICE IN PALESTINE AND ISRAEL

Since last year, we have been working with a team of ELCA and ELCJHL members to conduct a review of the ELCA’s Peace Not Walls campaign. We are excited to announce that as part of the outcome of that review, Peace Not Walls will be renamed and reshaped as **SUMUD: for Justice in Palestine and Israel**. To learn more about the review and about SUMUD, you can watch our recent webinar [here](#). Keep an eye on our [Peace Not Walls](#) page for more updates

>>> WHAT CAN WE DO?

For more information, find official statements and updates from ELCA church partners here: <https://elca.org/Israel-Hamas%20War>

To give to a **Lutheran Disaster Response appeal** to respond to urgent humanitarian needs in Gaza: <https://community.elca.org/gaza>

To sign up for **action alerts** for advocacy: <https://listserv.elca.org/scripts/wa.exe?SUBED1=PEACENOTWALLSBLOG&A=1>

FAMILY UPDATES AND THANKS

>>> "WHAT'S IT LIKE FOR YOU?"

The birds sing. The breeze rustles through the olive trees. We sit in the kitchen of Bishop Azar, his wife Nahla, and their daughter Pastor Sally, sharing cups of tea and homemade apple cake, using Arabic, German, and English to figure out the secret ingredient: cloves. Overhead, we hear the sound of a military jet on the way to Gaza: the sound of death.

We worship in the chapel at Redeemer, expecting a congregation of no one except the presiders. Instead, twelve come: young German volunteers; the representative for the Lutheran World Federation program in Jerusalem; an ELCA couple from Iowa, who had planned to stay through Christmas and are now waiting for flights back home. We sing the Kyrie and light candles. None of us make it through the sermon without crying. We share communion and end with an Advent hymn: Come Now, o Prince of Peace.

At home, our kids adjust to Zoom school and being indoors all day. We stock up on groceries. (Flashbacks to the pandemic.) We talk about the news, some. Our kids are Palestinian, and both Israeli and U.S. citizens. They know this is not disconnected from our family's reality, our neighbors' reality. We talk, and play backgammon, argue over whose turn it is to empty the dishwasher and get cranky with each other... and forgive each other. We are safe. And we grieve for so many who are not. We are heartbroken. And we are deeply, deeply grateful to be able to be here, standing and working with our Palestinian partners on behalf of our church. Thanks be to God.

Maybe hope is a green lemon
bitter on the branch, trusting
justice will ripen in its season.



Photos:

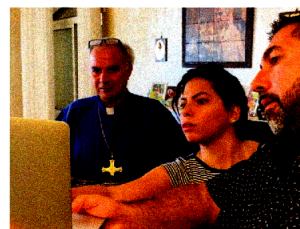
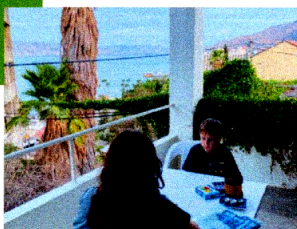
Above: an unripe lemon in Eilaboun village
Right: family getaway to the Sea of Galilee;
Gabi and Pastor Sally help Bishop Azar record
a video message. Below (l-r): Fall retreat with
ELCJHL pastors; Meghan with the World Day of
Prayer 2024 Palestine team; family outing to a
fall festival in old city Beit Jala.



>>> THANK YOU FOR PRAYERS AND SUPPORT

We remain incredibly thankful for the outpourings of prayer and love for our family and for all the people of the Holy Land. We have felt the power of your prayer; it has sustained us. We truly do feel safe where we are; and we also feel deeply called to be where we are in these days, to offer whatever help we can as we accompany our local partners on behalf of the ELCA. We could not do this without your financial and spiritual support. If you would like to sponsor us as missionaries, please visit <https://community.elca.org/MissionaryGiving> and choose our names from the dropdown menu.

Thanks to those of you who have reached out to inquire about visits to your area or congregation in summer 2024. There's still time to chat if you'd like to host us for a visit during home assignment!



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**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in America**

God's work. Our hands.

Issue 11/23

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Join Us in Worship

8:15 a.m. Traditional Worship
In Person or Zoom

10:45 a.m. Contemporary Worship
In Person or Zoom

Our Mission:

Together we share God's
abundance to transform lives
through the love of Jesus.

Our Vision:

Living in God's boundless
love, in Christ we envision a
future where church and
community are one.

**Celebrate Your Faith—
Renew Your Spirit—
Love One Another**

Important Dates Related to Newsletter Content (Read the Articles for Details)

November 10-12	Middle School Confirmation Retreat
November 18	High School Friendsgiving
November 19	Advent Festival
November 19	Combined Chancel Choirs at Trinity Lutheran
November 19	Thanksgiving Worship and Pie Auction at Trinity
November 19	Service in the Community Forum
December 1-3	Sky Ranch Advent Retreat
December 9	Paint & Pour with Sky Ranch
December 10	Christmas Pageant
December 10	Seasonal Concert with Ryan Marvel
December 10	Parents Day Out
December 15-16	High School Lock-in
December 21	Longest Night
December 24	Christmas Eve
December 30	Young Adults
December 31	New Year's Eve Brunch Church
January 7	Lunch 'n' Learn
January 21	Zion Annual Meeting