

Zion Lutheran Church
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"To be together growing in Christ, to be His message to others"

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Separation of Church & State?

A couple of years back I had the honor of being invited over to Elder & Sue Vogel's home. Elder is a PA State Senator and his property stretches out in front of Oak Grove Lutheran Church. They are good neighbors that decorate the front of the church every fall for Oak Grove's Annual Festival. It is always a pleasure to see them, both as neighbors and when they are out and about campaigning, serving, working, and encouraging others to get engaged in local politics. Dinner was wonderful and the conversation was cordial. Later into the evening, after the meal was finished and the last of the dishes had been taken from the table a conversation about our lives growing up begin to naturally emerge. Like myself, family meal time had been formative in their younger years, especially the family conversations over dinner. You never knew just what might be said in a dinner conversation; there were few guidelines about what could or couldn't be brought up. Accept for one rule: No talking about politics or religion! At which point someone said, "With that as a rule, what can a Pastor and a Senator talk about?" We had a good laugh before Senator Vogel and I agreed that we could talk about the weather, farming, and honey bees....

Now I agree that the dinner table is not always the best place to talk religion or politics! However, I have experienced a prevailing belief, especially among people of faith, that there is never a good time to talk about politics or religion. Especially that one never mix the two. I have heard this said a lot and I have come to find this line of thinking to be in error. It is not good or right, it's not biblical, it's not Christian, and it's not even American.

What about separation of Church and State? It is in fact the misunderstanding of this American principle that is one of the root causes of the belief that religion and politics should not mix. At some point in American history (and maybe a historian could tell you exactly when) significant numbers of Americans began to believe that Separation of Church and State meant that religious beliefs had no business in anything outside of church, when in fact the opposite is true. Separation of Church and State was designed to keep a State Church from forming and governing the people; as well as giving the freedom to form Religious Organizations free from the interference of government. It was not designed to keep religious values from society, politics, or elections. Or to keep Religious Organizations from expressing their views about social justice, education, immigration, or any other myriad of topics that have become highly political.

Men and women of faith must in fact follow the values they believe to be true about the nature of God and the teaching of scripture and use these guiding principles to inform their political views. To vote for candidates of high moral character that they believe share similar views as to the nature of God and their calling to serve the neighbor; as well as the policies that will make this happen. A Christian is called to be a champion for the poor, oppressed, lonely, lost, and neglected. To do this work one must get political. Getting involved in politics is a way for the Christian to live out their calling as a disciple of Jesus. Jesus was very political....

As is true with all things there are times when it is best not to engage others about religion and/or politics. And there are places that are better for this than others. The pulpit is one such place, where politics

are unavoidable but must be navigated with great care so that the impression is never given that one party or candidate is endorsed but rather that the will of God as is interpreted by scripture is put first and foremost. Similarly, in order that we can live in love with our family and neighbors, sometimes religion and politics must be put second to loving our neighbor as God loves us. In which case, we pray our actions speak our values and show God's love through us in stronger ways than our words ever could.

However, even though there are times when it is best not to talk about religion and politics, we should always use our religious beliefs to inform our political views. It will be a dark day indeed when Christians don't seek out office and people of faith no longer engage their beliefs about God in daily life and in American Politics.

Just a thought.

Pastor Nathaneil



Congregation Meeting Rescheduled

The Congregation meeting has been rescheduled, and will be held on Sunday, Decmeber 9, following worship. This meeting requires a quorum of at least 50 voting members. We have a lot of important business to conduct, such as approving our budget for 2019, and also approving our new Constitution and By-Laws. We have a full slate of council candidates, but they need to be approved. **Your attendance is vital!**



Christmas Poinsettias can still be ordered! Help beautify our sanctuary, and then take your plants home to add to your holiday décor. Orders will be accepted through Sunday, December 2nd. You will find an order form in this newsletter, you can print a form from our website (www.zioninharmony.com), or you can pick up a form from the table in the entryway.



If you are currently getting the Zion Echoes in paper form—either in the mail or at church—and would like to have it emailed to you, please let Melissa know either by calling her, or emailing her (zion557@zoominternet.net). You can also access the newsletter online at our website (www.zioninharmony.com).

For Sale:

The last 4 wooden tables for the social hall are being replaced with 6 plastic tables from money given to WELCA in memory of Goldie Rader. The wooden tables are available for \$25.00 each. Please see Melissa in the office on Tuesday or Thursday or a Council member if you are interested in purchasing one or all of the wooden tables. They are currently stored in the closet at the back of the social hall.

Serving Zion this month

Ushers



December 2: Frank Porter
December 9: Trudy Levere
December 16: Doug Trimble
December 23: Denny Bintrim
December 30: Marsha Davis

Greeters



December 2: Tom Meyer & Jason Schomaker
December 9: Carl & Betty Miller
December 16: Jes Trimble & Chase Black
December 23: Debbie Muders & Peg Kaltenbach
December 30: Angela Muniz & Family

Money Counters



December 2: Pat Pflug & Linda Armstrong
December 9: George Measel & Bill Gasior
December 16: Debbie Muders & Shirley Fichter
December 23: Sally Measel & Evelyn Stephens
December 24: George & Al /Evelyn & Shirley
December 30: Bill Gasior & Al Stephens

Bulletin Sponsors



December 2: Trimble
December 9: Stephens
December 16: Burgh
December 23: Burgh
December 24: Zebell
December 30: Zebell

- If you are unable to serve on your Sunday, please trade with someone.
- Bulletins may be sponsored with a donation of \$15 per week, to offset the cost of the bulletins, and can be given to the glory of God, in memory of someone, or in honor of someone. Note "Bulletins" in the memo section of your check, and please call Melissa in the office if you'd like to sponsor the bulletins.
- Flowers may be given on the altar any Sunday. There are forms on the bulletin board by the office.

Advent & Christmas Schedule



Advent begins on Sunday, December 2nd. Please join us each week as we prepare to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. Our new Advent wreath will be dedicated on December 2nd.

On December 2nd, following our worship service, we will decorate the church for the holiday season. Many hands make light work, so please stay and help! We will celebrate December birthdays and anniversaries that day during our Fellowship Hour.



This year our Christmas Eve services will be held at 7:00 and 10:00 p.m., with Pastor Susie officiating. We will celebrate the birth of Jesus following the early service with birthday cake.

Our Christmas Eve offering will benefit our missionary, Kirsten Laderach, in Madagascar.

Be sure to come and worship on this special evening!





Saturday, Dec. 1
Sunday, Dec. 9
Thursday, Dec. 13
Wednesday, Dec. 19

Every Wednesday

8:00 a.m. Men's Bible Study
CONGREGATION MEETING
7:00 p.m. Council meets
10:00 a.m. WELCA
meets/Christmas party
7:00 p.m. Choir practice

Sally Measel will be hosting the Secret Sister Dinner at her house on Tuesday, December 4th at 6:00 pm. If you were in any way part of Secret Sisters in 2018, please plan on attending and revealing who you have been praying for and surprising with your gifts this year. Please RSVP to Sally by Sunday, November 25th. As there is money in the account from last year, there will be no cost for attending this year.



The Ellwood City Chorale will be at Zion to perform their holiday concert on Sunday, December 9th, at 3:00. This is a great way to start off the holiday season! Following the concert, there will be a social time with cookies, coffee, and punch. If you can contribute some cookies, please sign the sheet on the bulletin board.

We will once again be ringing the Salvation Army bell at BiLo Foods in Harmony. One hour time slots are available, from 10:00 a.m. until 6:00 p.m. Our day to ring the bell is **MONDAY, DECEMBER 17th**. Please sign the sheet on the bulletin board to help. Bundle up and help spread some holiday cheer, while supporting a wonderful cause!



PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By George Measel

I have started this article to keep the congregation informed on what is happening here at Zion. We have installed the windows in the parsonage. Al advised that the temperature has increased because the air that was infiltrating the house has been stopped. Mr. Byler has measured the roof and that work will start shortly, weather permitting.

I would like to advise what a new pastor is going to cost us, but we do not know any exact figures.

Salary	\$35,843.00	if newly ordained
Experience	\$ 400.00	per year, for each year of experience
Housing	\$16,570.00	
SS 50%	Salary	
Car	Mileage per IRS	
Cont. Education	\$ 700.00	
Prof. Exp.	\$ 400.00	
Publication	\$ 200.00	
Benefits	See Portico	

Just from the figures I have given, you can see that the pastor will cost us \$30,000.00 to \$40,000.00 per year. None of this was input in the 2019 Budget.

We are meeting with St. Paul's executive committee to start the yoke process. There will be more on this in later Newsletters.

Year to date, we are in a good position; we will meet our obligation to Synod and we have made many improvements to our facilities.

CALL COMMITTEE UPDATE

The combined Call Committees of Zion and St. Paul have reviewed three Lutheran Pastoral candidates in the last three months of 2018. We have attempted to be thorough and patient in interviewing the candidates and in researching their background and history of their pastoral accomplishments. We were able to view one candidate in person and another on video presenting their sermons. At this time we have not found the candidate that we think would be a good fit for our congregations. Please be patient with us and continue to pray that the right pastor can be called to both of our churches in the near future.

January Newsletter

*Deadline for articles will be
Tuesday, December 18th.*



Minutes of Council Meeting Thursday, November 8, 2018

Attendance: Pastor Nathaneil, Shirley Fichter, Pat Pflug, Al and Evelyn Stephens, Bill Gasior, George and Sally Measel.

Absent: Linda Armstrong and Debbie Muders

The meeting was opened with **Devotions** and Prayer by Shirley Fichter based on Mark 4: 30-32. Martin Luther said, “A Christian can be like a solitary bird” when little deeds can make for big impacts when done in the name of Jesus.

Secretary's Report: Evelyn had one correction on last month’s minutes concerning Roll Call. The October minutes said that a DOZEN members still have the newsletter mailed to them. It should say ACTIVE members. Here is where we stand on the newsletter situation: ACTIVE MEMBERS: Around 40 get the newsletter by email or get it online. 20 to 25 members pick up newsletter at the church. Melissa mails out around 9 or 10 to our shut-ins and nursing home residents. INACTIVE MEMBERS: Around 14 get the newsletter by email. Evelyn still pays for and mails out around 35 to 40 herself. She has been calling people to see if they are interested in getting put on the email list. There are 9 individuals or couples who Evelyn tried to contact but could get no forwarding address or valid phone numbers for. The Executive Team will need to vote to have these 9 removed from our membership.

Treasurer's Report:

	As of 10/31/18	As of 09/30/18
Checking	\$ 108,447.90	\$ 91,428.65
Petty Cash	25.00	25.00
Cash Balance	\$ 108,472.90	\$ 91,453.65
Less: Capital Improvements	36,375.57	35,830.57
Less: Designated Funds	32,076.90	30,757.08
Less: Payroll Tax Withholding	171.44	(2.95)
Current Budgeted Funds Available	\$ 39,848.99	\$ 24,868.95

Contributions by envelope and plate for October (4 Sundays) were \$9,403.00. Compared to our budgeted amount of \$6,543.20 giving was \$2,859.80 more than was needed to meet monthly budget. Receipts exceeded our budgeted amount on four Sundays last month. Envelope giving to date in 2018 totals \$102,780.04 (43 Sundays), and we are \$32,440.64 over budget.

It is important to understand that although our checking account shows \$108,447.90 most of that money is in designated accounts and can only be used for that specific account. The amount that we actually have to pay our bills is \$39,848.99.

Our average weekly attendance for October was 49.

Rex Energy – Miscellaneous (Account #980): Opening Balance was \$4,038.00. October receipts were \$408.90. October disbursements were \$136.30 (Cemetery Association). Ending balance for October was \$4,310.60.

Kathy Burg helped Shirley set up a Parsonage Loan Payable (Non-interest bearing loan for parsonage improvements). This takes the loan out of the Property line items. As of October 31st, \$2,000.00 has been paid back on the 2nd interest fee loan. The first loan has been completely paid off. Line 800 Building/Maintenance has \$22,605.57 and Line 806 Roof Replacement Fund has \$13,770.00. Line 917 175th Anniversary will have \$10,195.00 by mid-November.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Christman gave his report for the month of October which included mileage of 94.2 and 13.5 hours. He said his hours were low due to the death of his Grandmother and travel to Washington state plus family visiting here. He was told not to worry; we are so appreciative of all he does for us.

Old Business:

Budget: There was a question in the 2019 projected budget about Vicki Moyer's salary. It appears that she is getting less than she made in 2018, but she did NOT accept her raise for 2018. In 2019, she will make the same as in 2018 as is the case for all our employees. The 2019 budget has been approved by Council and is ready to be voted on at the November 18th Congregational meeting.

New Council: We will need one new Council member to replace Linda Armstrong. Please consider her position which is a combined team working with Bill Gasior on Every Member Involvement and Meeting Human Needs. These two teams have been working closely together.

St. Paul's: They did prepare a 2019 budget contingent on getting a new pastor. Zion did not as there are so many variables, with family situation, number of years of service, health care, etc.

New Business:

Call Committee Updates: George will ask Frank Porter to put a brief update each month in the newsletter letting everyone know where we are in the call process.

Costs of New Pastor: George Measel was asked to put an article in the newsletter including base salary of pastors, housing allowance, benefits.

New Council Retreat: is scheduled for Saturday, January 5, 2019 from 9:00 am to Noon.

January Congregational Meeting: is scheduled for Sunday, January 27th following the church service. A tureen lunch will follow the meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to review 2018 and, if it is ready, vote/approve the Parish Agreement with St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Zelienville.

TEAM REPORTS:

Property: Al reported that the new windows were installed in the parsonage on November 7 and 8 by ThermoTwin Windows. The parsonage roof will be installed following the completion of the food cupboard addition, weather permitting.

The sanctuary roof is leaking again. It has been repaired three times previously. A new metal roof will need to be installed over top the slate. Shirley Fichter made a motion that we move forward with doing the sanctuary roof and take the money out of the roof replacement fund and the balance out of the Building/Maintenance Fund. Bill 2nd the motion and it was passed unanimously by Council.

Shirley made a second motion to authorize John Byler to reface the bell tower when he does the sanctuary roof. There is enough money in the 175th anniversary account to pay for this. Evelyn 2nd the motion and it also was passed by Council. *(See Treasurer's report above).*

Fellowship: The team currently needs no additional funding. Upcoming events include Dec. 2nd – Birthday/Anniversary celebration, Dec. 9th at 3 pm we will host the Ellwood City Chorale. We hope to invite all the area churches and get a good turnout for this event. All the rest of Sundays in December will be regular fellowship times.

Every Member Involvement/Meeting Human Needs: Nov. 18th, the Turkey Trot will end. This is also the deadline for the Shoebox project collection. Bill is working with Ross Cummings on redesigning the church's website. Look for updates there. Zion will ring bells at Bi-Lo, Northgate Plaza, one day in December. We have not been assigned the date yet. Look for the sign-up sheet to be posted on the bulletin board.

Christian Education: Shirley gave Marsha Davis a list of all children who attended VBS this year. Marsha contacted them in hopes of doing a Christmas pageant, but got NO response or interest.

Worship: The Worship team met on Nov. 7th after choir practice with Pastor Susie, all of our worship assistants, and Rosemarie. Pam F., Tom B., Marsha D., Doug T., and Joanne P. are willing to serve Zion as worship assistants for 2019. They invite anyone else to join this group or just give it a try. Speak to Pam if you are interested, and training is provided. We have a new Advent wreath this year to be dedicated on the first Sunday of Advent, Dec. 2. Rosemarie will be using a special hymn during the lighting of the wreath each week. The worship assistants will be responsible for

finding someone to light the wreath. Rosemarie will be using some appropriate Christmas hymns for the later weeks of Advent, as we do like to sing Christmas hymns before Christmas Eve. Setting 3 in the Cranberry Hymnal will be used through Christmas Eve. Pastor Susie will be here for both services on Christmas Eve, 7:00 p.m. and 10:00 p.m. We are looking forward to the Ellwood City Chorale on Dec. 9 at 3:00 p.m. Chime Choir will play during the service on Dec. 16. Dec. 30 will be a service of Lessons and Carols with two of our worship assistants serving Zion. Pastor Susie is planning a class for those who desire to become members of Zion. Please speak to Pastor Susie or Pam F. if you know of anyone else who would like to become a member. Dan Schall has reserved Aug 11, 2019 for a service with us. This could be an outdoor service if we wanted. There will be no worship team meeting in Dec., so the next meeting is scheduled for Jan., 3 at 8:00 p.m. We discussed All Saints Sunday and the reading of the names of deceased members, family, and friends. Please let Melissa in the church office know of any additions or corrections to the list. This year we remembered our members Evelyn Burcik, Goldie Rader, Kim Kelly, and Mark Beige who passed in 2018.

Stewardship: Sally has written the letter to go with the year-end financial giving statements that will be distributed in January. Shirley pointed out that we owe \$3,696.36 yet towards out pledge to Synod's Mission Support of \$11,389.00.

Executive: The Executive teams from St. Paul's and from Zion plus one additional church member from each will meet at St. Paul's on Tuesday, November 13th, 6:30 pm. The purpose is to begin the paper work for the Parish agreement.

Money Counters for December are as follows:

Dec. 2 – Linda and Pat; Dec. 9 – Bill and George; Dec. 16 – Debbie and Shirley; Dec. 23 – Evelyn and Sally; Dec. 24 at 7 pm – Al and George; Dec. 24 at 10 pm – Evelyn and Shirley, Dec. 30 – Al and Bill.

Next Council meeting: Thursday, December 13, 2018 at 7:00 PM.

Devotions for next meeting: **Evelyn Stevens**

Deadline for December's Newsletter: Tuesday, November 13th.

Motion to Adjourn was made by Shirley and seconded by Al, followed by the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Sally Measel