

ZION'S HEAVENLY

Look for:

- *Worship Schedule
- *Music Schedule
- *Announcements
- *Youth Group News



- *Exciting Events
- *Monthly Calendar of Events
- *Birthday Calendar
- *Synod & Conference News
- And Much More!**

Happenings



2025

NEWSLETTER



Photo by Gayle Mateyak

*235 Years of worshipping the
Lord with each other....*

**ZION'S STONE CHURCH OF
WEST PENN TOWNSHIP**
A Federated ELCA & UCC Church

45 Cemetery Rd
New Ringgold, PA 17960

570-386-5111

www.zionstonechurch.org

Rev. Russell Campbell, Pastor
Cell # **610-737-2634**
zionstch@ptd.net
revarc@ptd.net

Come Worship with Us!
9:00am – Sunday Worship Service
(1st Sunday of the month is Holy Communion)
10:15am – Sunday School
For All Ages

As of April 2005,
Zion's Stone Church Lutheran Congregation and Zion's Stone Church United
Church of Christ Congregation enter into a shared ministry. Keeping both
heritages in the Sunday Worship Service each week.



CHURCH STAFF...



Pastor: Rev. Russell Campbell

Pastor Russ's Office Hours:

Call for an Appointment if you need to see the Pastor
or you can call or text

Cell Phone # 610-737-2634

Pastor's Home Email: revarc@ptd.net

Pastor's Church Email: zionstch@ptd.net

Church Administrator/Treasurer:

Charlotte Fritz Office Hours: Due to surgery in May
Charlotte will be working from home for the at least the summer.
Please call and leave a message and she will get back to you.

Charlotte's Office Email: zscofc@ptd.net

(Please use this email for information for Charlotte.)



Church Secretary

Amy Mogish **New** Office Hours:

Monday – 9:00am – 3:00pm, Tuesday Wednesday & Friday - Closed
Thursday – 1:30pm – 3:30pm

Email and phone messages will be checked thru-out the week
Please call ahead if planning to visit, hours may vary.

Amy's Office Email: ZSCSecretary@ptd.net

(Please use this email for information for Amy)

(Office is closed on Tuesday's, Wednesdays, & Friday's)



Church Office Phone Number:

570-386-5111 – When calling use:
prompt #2 for Pastor
prompt #3 for Amy
prompt #4 for Charlotte

Check us out on Facebook!

Thanks to Sarah Martinez
for being our Facebook Coordinator!

Zion's Stone Website

www.zionstonechurch.org

Music Director/Organist:

Erin Zelinski – 570-205-3511

Sexton(s):

Fred (& Donna) Gimbi
Home # 570-386-2888
Fred's Cell #570-573-7642

Card Care coordinator:

Nancy Meiser - 570-205-9267

Genealogy Requests:

Todd Cheese
Cell: 570-778-3641
Todd's email:
CheeseT@icloud.com

WORSHIP MAY 2025

Sunday, May 4, 2025 – 3RD SUNDAY OF EASTER
9:00am – Worship Service w/Holy Communion (Pew)
Sermon Title: “Abundance in Scarcity”
Acts 9:1-6 Revelation 5:11-14
John 21:1-19

Sunday, May 11, 2025 – 4th SUNDAY OF EASTER
9:00am – Worship Service
Mother’s Day
w/Young People’s Time and King’s Kids
Sermon Title: “Risky Business”
Acts 11:1-18 Revelation 21:1-6
John 13:31-35

Sunday, May 18, 2025 – 5th SUNDAY OF EASTER
9:00am – Worship Service
Reaffirmation of Faith
Sermon Title: “Listening to the Shepherd”
Acts 9:36-43 Revelation 7:9-17
John 10:22-30

Sunday, May 27, 2025 – 6th SUNDAY OF EASTER
9:00am – Worship Service
Ascension Day
Sermon Title: “Remembering”
Acts 16:9-15 Ephesians 1:15-23
Luke 24:44-53

Sunday, June 2, 2025 – 7th SUNDAY OF EASTER

9:00am – Worship Service

Sermon Title: “Endings and Beginnings I”

Acts 16:16-34 Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21

John 17:20-26

Sunday, June 8, 2025 – Pentecost Sunday

9:00am – Worship Service

Pastor Russ’s Last Service

Sermon Title: “Endings and Beginnings II”

Acts 2:1-21 Romans 8:14-17

John 14:8-17

Rev. Russell Campbell, Pastor

Pastor Russ has been with us for 7 ½ years and he has decided to retire and it will be hard to see him leave. The church will need to call a new pastor and so the call committee has been formed and will be working on finding a new minister for Zion’s Stone. This process can be a long process, even taking up to two years, before a new Minister is call. Pastor Russ’s last day at Zion’s Stone Church will be on **Sunday, June 8, 2025**. A Retirement Planning Group has been established to host a Retirement Party for Pastor Russ on June 8th during Sunday School. They will have a catered meal prepared for that day, so they will need to know how many people plan on coming. **Deadline to signup is June 1, 2025**. There is a sign- up sheet in the Church narthex to sign-up on or you can call Amy at 570-386-5111 or you can email her at zscsecretary@ptd.net if you and your family intend on being there. Seating may be limited so signup early.

There will be a donation basket for anyone who would like to help offset the cost of the meal on that day.

Please keep the Call Committee in your prayers. Please keep Pastor Russ and Denise in your prayers. There will be more Information in the June newsletter. We will miss you Pastor Russ!!



Board Meeting

Zion's Stone Church Board Meeting - Monday, March 10, 2025

X Pastor Russell	X Erin Zeigler	Sam Schaefer	X Gene Schaeffer
X Dan Metzger	X Darlene Gruver	X L C Dean	X Stacey Cheese
X Dean Meiser	X Brady Miller		

(X)=Board Member Present

Congregation present: Charlotte Fritz & Darryl Fritz

Call to Order: Pastor Russ opened the meeting with a prayer.

Vice President Dan Metzger (stand-in for Sam Schaefer) called the meeting to order.

Pastor's Report: Pastor's report reviewed, on file.

Pastor noted Denise has a caregiver for part of the day, which allows him some free time. Pastor planning to officiate 1st Holy Communion on Palm Sunday, April 13th. Letters to the parents have been sent.

Secretary's Report: Last month's Board minutes were presented and reviewed. Motion to accept: Brady 2nd Dean.

Treasurer's Report: Presented and reviewed.

It was noted, February was a busy month even with the snow days. Fuel was added at the Church every two weeks due to the cold weather. The electric bill increased because of a lighting issue at the sign.

The Lombard Securities (January 1st-31st) investments and cash value increased.

Committee Reports: (Board Representative in parentheses)

Finance (Erin Zeigler, Charlotte Fritz, Dean Meiser)-Final payment (remaining balance) on Church carpeting was issued in the amount of \$15,600.

Personnel (Stacey Cheese, Erin Zeigler, Brady Miller)-

No Report. Per Stacey, working on handbook and seeking information from Pen Tele Data networks.

Fundraising (Charlotte Fritz, Erin Zeigler, Stacey Cheese)-Filling Sale is April 19th, pick up orders 11:30am -12:30pm. Zion's will be hosting a spaghetti dinner May 17th to benefit the UPMC transplant department. Social will be held July 27th. New name is Baskets and Berries Bonanza. No hot food will be served.

Outreach(L.C. Dean, Nancy Meiser)-Meatball sale is March 22nd. Charlotte is working on the not active member list.

Property(Dan Metzger, Scot Dietrich, Gary Clemson)-
Carpet installed, no issues at present.
Vestibule carpet selection (approximately \$1,500) approved.
The new carpet dedication will be April 6th.

Youth Group(Charlotte Fritz, Gene Schaeffer)-Meeting was held last night. The 30 Hour Famine date is April 25th-26th with Youth Sunday, April 27th. Lizzy Davenport and Bradyn Brothers have applied for the Eoin Towers Memorial Scholarship.

Worship and Music (Dean Meiser, Brady Miller)-No Report. Handbells may be playing on Easter Sunday.
Easter flowers will be delivered April 19th.

CE/Sunday School(Darlene Gruver, Dean Meiser)-Per Eileen- March 23rd, Sunday school children (Nursery to Grade 5)-will have classes at normal time. Our egg hunt will be held on April 19th at 2:00pm(rain or shine). Last year we had a big turnout from the community with almost 70 children! The SS will supply all the eggs/candy for the hunt which goes up to 5th grade. We are planning a special offering for Cystic Fibrosis the first Sunday in May. VBS will be held in June 23-27 for ages 3 to grade 5. Time will be 6:30pm to 8:30pm. MAGNIFIED by Lifeway...Made to magnify God!

Safety/Security(Gene Schaeffer, Sam Schaefer, Blair Miller)-No Report. Other committees/Misc-nothing presented.

Old Business: Sunday March 2nd Board members held a short meeting before the Church service; unanimously voting to have carpet installed in the Church vestibule. Hoping this carpet will lessen tracking in dirt and grime.

New Business: Carpet dedication will be April 6th.
The Call committee has 10 volunteers to help in the new minister search, under the direction of Dean Meiser. A work session for the call committee is scheduled for Monday, March 24th at 6:30pm.

Next Church Board Meeting is Monday, April 14th at 6:30pm.
The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.
Motion was made to adjourn the meeting by Brady 2nd by Dean.

Respectfully submitted by Board Secretary, Darlene Gruver

NEWSLETTER SUBMITTALS...

Please help the office staff be efficient by having all newsletter submittals emailed to the church office (or placed in the newsletter submittal boxes) by the newsletter deadline, the **Third Sunday** of each month.

If you would like your wedding announcement or if you have a loved one who has entered into eternal life, thank you messages, etc., please contact the office by the newsletter deadline or we may not be able to publish your information until the next month. *Thank You!*

NEWSLETTER SPONSORSHIPS... \$20.00 per month

If you are interested in sponsoring the newsletter, Email Charlotte, zscofc@ptd.net, your wording for the newsletter or place your envelope in your packet marked Newsletter Sponsor. The newsletter is printed one time per month except for the July/August newsletter which is a combined newsletter.

ALTAR FLOWER SPONSORSHIPS... We are have a new Florist! Forget-Me-Not Florist in Orwigsburg. The new cost of Altar Flowers are \$55.00 & Rosebuds are \$13.00-\$28.00 (depends on if you order Altar Flowers with it) All Flower Orders must be received at least **1 week in advance**. If you are interest in sponsoring altar flowers please call the office at (570) 386-5111 prompt #3, **before 12 pm on Monday. Leave a message** with your telephone number and the exact wording you would like to see it printed on the slides.

Lectors are needed for every Sunday.

Please sign up in the Narthex. If you or someone you know would like to be a LECTOR ... New volunteers are always welcome.

Acolytes... Last year's class and current confirmation classes please sign up on the calendar in the Narthex. Two acolytes are needed for each Sunday. Please arrive by 8:50am to prepare.

Do you have a new Address or Telephone &/or Cell Phone Number?

Please notify the office either through email (zscofc@ptd.net) or phone (570-386-5111) with your new information. This way we can keep in touch with you and provide you with important information regarding the church. Thank you!

Auditorium Bookings:

The Auditorium is open for events. Please contact the church office use prompt #3 (Amy) or #4 (Charlotte) if you would like to book the Auditorium for your birthday parties, wedding rehearsal dinners, anniversary parties, etc. You will need to sign a contact and return it with the event rental fee 2 weeks prior your event date.

(All the clip art printed in this newsletter was taken from google clip art.)

2025 WORSHIP ATTENDANCE FIGURES...

March 2 - 127	April 2 - ?? (Mid-Week Lent)
March 5 - 51 (Ash Wednesday)	April 6 - 100
March 9 - 113	April 9 - 11 (Mid-Week Lent)
March 12 - ?? (Mid-Week Lent)	April 13 - 127
March 16 - 106	April 17 - 67 (Maundy Thurs.)
March 19 - ?? (Mid-Week Lent)	April 18 - 54 (Good Friday)
March 23 - 106	April 20 6:30am - 55
March 26 - 118 (Mid-Week Lent)	April 20 9:00am - 156
March 30 - 118	April 27 - 92



2025 MARCH

Current Giving:

Total Income Budgeted for 2024-----\$ 234,908.37

Total Benevolence income for 2024 -----\$ 11,500.00

Total Income plus Benevolence ----- \$ 246,408.37

**Thank you for
your continued
support of
Zion's Stone
Church!**

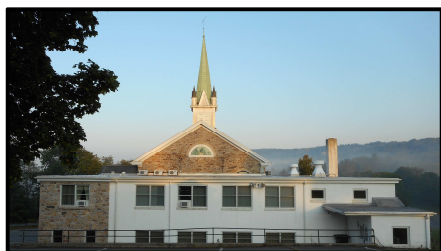
(In order to meet our spending plan,
we need to receive these amounts,)

Monthly Income & Benevolence	Gain/ (-Loss)	Weekly Budgeted Income & Benevolence
\$21,572.41	\$ 1996.71	(\$ 4,517.46 - per week) (\$19,575.70 - per month)

2 Newsletter Sponsorships:

The May newsletter is in honor of the 21st birthday of Gabriel Fritz on May 5th by Mom and Dad.

The May newsletter is also in honor of the 40th Wedding Anniversary of David & Adele Snyder on the 18th.



SPECIAL THANK YOU...

(The church receives thank you letters from other organizations that we support through Benevolence giving throughout the year.)

To My Wonderful Church Family, Thank you so much for all your prayers, and thank you for all my get well and birthday cards. All this support makes this difficult time feel a little easier. Can't wait to see you all! **Loretta Beers**

A Thank You letter was also received by Donald Miller's Family and was read to the congregation thanking everyone for their prayers, sympathy cards, love & support during Donald's illness & passing. **The Family of Donald Miller**

Special Thank You to Mr. & Mrs. Cheese for visiting Geraldine Balliet, providing communion. Grateful! **Jill Cravotta**

First Holy Communion Class...

Congratulations to:

Isabella Huegel, daughter of Josh & Chelsea Huegel,

Maisie Schock, daughter of Clint & Marie Schock,

Wyatt Frankhouser, son of Robert & Misty Hamm-Frankhouser

Grayson Balliet, son of Steve & Jennifer Balliet

All 4 received 1st Holy Communion on Palm Sunday, April 13, 2025.



Our Prayers are with you during this difficult time...

Larry & Kay Hamm and Family & Friends
on the death of Larry's Sister, **Lillian Gernert**,
who entered into eternal life on March 31, 2025



Robert & Loretta Beers and Family & Friends
on the death of Bob's sister,
Carolyn Kunkel, who entered into eternal life on
April 20, 2025.

The Family & Friends of
Elmer Henry,
who entered into eternal
life on April 22, 2025.
Elmer turned 100 last
August and was our
oldest living member.



The Family & Friends of
Barbara Renninger,
who entered into eternal
life of April 23, 2025.

Congratulations goes to....

Erin Zeigler & Eric Ballister on their wedding on April 5, 2025. Eric & Erin were married at Zion's Stone Church by Rev. Russell Campbell. Erin is the daughter of Adam & Susan Zeigler. Eric is the son of Bonnie Ballister & Thomas Ballister.

Congratulations Erin & Eric!

Two Become One



Dylan Miller & Dominique Hughes on their wedding on April 12, 2025.

Dylan & Dominique were married at the Yuengling Mansion in Pottsville by Chris Osenbach. Dylan is the son of Dwane & Jessica Miller and Dominique is the daughter of Charles & Courtney Hughes & Krystyna Kakol

Congratulations to Dylan & Dominique!





*Anyone interested in joining any of the choirs,
please see Erin Zelinski, Choir director & Organist.*

No experience necessary!



*Come join the Fun! Learn something new!
Share your talents! Make new friends!*

Choir Rehearsal:



**Handbell Practices
at 6:15pm
Thursday Nights.**

**Choir
Practices
at 6:45pm
Thursday
Nights.**



Calling all 2025 Graduates!

Please notify the office if you are graduating from July 2024 – June 2025. Please also indicate where you will be articulating to or what your future plans are. Please tell us the name of school you are graduating from & the name of the institution you will be going to, if it pertains to you.

We will be honoring the Graduates on June 15th on Father's Day at the West Penn Park. Worship Service that day will start at 10:00am.

Guess whose coming to Dinner?

The Outreach Committee is hosting a night of dinner & fellowship on May 16th. You can host a meal or be a guest at someone elses house. If interested sign up on the sign up sheet in the Narthex or see Jennifer Clinton for more information.

Have dinner & fellowship with other congregational memebers! Have fun! Eat good food! Get to know each other more!



Sunday School News...



VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
June 23-27 6:30-8:30 pm

MAGNIFIED! (by Lifeway)

DISCOVERING THE BIGNESS OF GOD IN THE SMALLEST OF THINGS

Our amazing God is not only the Creator of all things, but He also cares about His creation, right down to the tiniest detail. At VBS, we'll look closely at the details of God's amazing world and magnify, or proclaim, the greatness of God...We were made to magnify God!

MAGNIFIED! VBS is for all kids **Age 3 to Grade 5** and will be held right here at Zion's. If you missed April registration, it's not too late!! **REGISTER NOW** on the church's web page or pick up a form at church or Sunday school. Volunteers... don't forget to sign up too!!

- May 4** CF Special Offering - to support one of our favorite teams Courageous Cousins (Benjamin Hehn and his cousin Aidan) Join us in the fight against Cystic Fibrosis ** Offering baskets will be in the church and Sunday school!
- May 25** No Sunday school classes - Attend Memorial Day services here! Take time to honor the memory of our veterans!
- June 1** Last Day of Sunday School
- June 8** Sunday school classes will be cancelled for Pastor Russ's Party

**Fundraising is vital to ensuring the continued progress of CF research. Despite the achievements, there is no cure, and people with CF continue to lose their lives to this disease. Visit the Lehigh Valley Great Strides web page to learn more about Cystic Fibrosis and the CF Foundation!





Meeting was held on April 13, 2025.

Members Present: Bradyn Brothers, Lillian Huegel, Maddie Miller, Tyler Buchman, Emily Buchman, Destiny Steinmertz, Lizzy Davenport & Sarah Davenport

Advisors Present: Charlotte Fritz, Darryl Fritz, Marianne Storch, Kyle Snyder, Dave Snyder, Adele Snyder, Karen Wood & Joy Hauck

Show N Tell: Joy Hauck

Secretary's Report given by Destiny

Treasurer's Report given by Charlotte

Old Business

- 30 Hour Famine & Youth Sunday was cancelled due to low attendance.
 - The Youth Group will still make a donation to World Vision.
- May 17th – Spaghetti Dinner Fundraiser – All proceeds will go to the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute in Philadelphia. Help might be needed. Can use this for service hours at School.
 - The Youth Group will donate a \$100.00
- Eoin K. Towers Memorial Scholarship applicants Bradyn Brothers & Lizzy Davenport have handed in their applications. Youth Group Advisors will read & go over them before the May 18th Youth Group Meeting.

New Business

- Upcoming Outing Suggestions: Lehigh Valley Zoo, Bear Rock Mini Golf, Christian Music Concert, Dorney Park, Iron Pigs baseball game, Philadelphia Phillies Baseball game, Bowling, Roller Skating, Knoebels, Lazer tag, etc.

Next Youth Group Meetings:

May 18th at 7:00pm

Snacks: Maddie Miller

Drinks: are provided at the church

Show N Tell – Karma Gold/orLillian Huegel



“Encourage not Discourage.”

Respectfully Submitted By: Charlotte Fritz, Youth Group Advisor

Fundraising News...

The Social will be back at the park soon, but not this year. So the Fundraing Committee decided to plan something a little different on Sunday, July 27, 2025 instead of the social....

They will be hosting a...

“Baskets & Berries” Bonanza

Sunday, July 27, 2025

12:00pm – 5:00pm

Come out
For Yummy Ice
Cream and
Fellowship.



MENU:

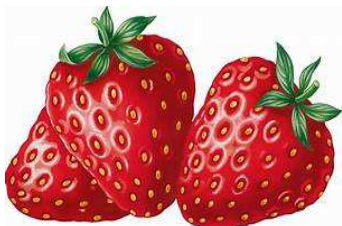
Ice Cream
Waffles
All kinds of Berries
for toppings &
other toppings
Drinks

They will have a basket extravaganza at the “Baskets & Berries” Bonanza.

They will have some big raffle items at the “Baskets & Berries” Bonanza.

THEY NEED YOUR HELP....if you would like to donate an item, wrapped or not (they will wrap them for you) please bring your item to Church on Sunday, July 20th from 8:00am – 11:00am, Monday 9:30am – 3:00pm, or Thursday 1:30pm – 3:30pm or by appointment on Friday & Saturday, July 25 & 26 by calling Charlotte Fritz at (570)952-4689.

If you would like to donate a basket but don't want to shop let Charlotte Fritz or Marianne Storch know and they will shop for you. Give them a donation amount and they will get something on your behalf.



Your donations are greatly appreciated by the Fundraising Committee!



BE AN ORGAN DONER....SAVE A LIFE!

We currently have a congregational member who is waiting on a double organ transplant at UPMC Pittsburgh, so the Fundraising Committee is hosting an All-You-Can-Eat Spaghetti Dinner on May 17, 2025 for the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute At UPMC Presbyterian (Pittsburgh) Hospital. We will also be hosting a Blood drive on August, 24, 2025. Watch for more information in Up-coming newsletters.

The Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute

The leading resource dedicated to helping people from around the world with end-stage organ failure, the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute was established in 1985 as the Pittsburgh Transplantation Institute. It was renamed in 1996 in honor of Thomas E. Starzl, MD, PhD, whose foresight, perseverance, and commitment made him the modern-day father of organ transplantation.

The mission of the Thomas E. Starzl Transplantation Institute is to foster a multidisciplinary approach to the continual improvement of the clinical, scientific, and social aspects of transplantation to improve the lives of patients with end-stage organ failure. The Starzl Transplantation Institute places a strong emphasis on the advancement of basic science and clinically applied research, and the teaching and training of multinational specialists.

The Starzl Transplantation Institute's transplant team has a tradition of caring for some of the most medically compromised patients. Nevertheless, the institute has maintained patient and graft survival rates that meet national benchmarks.



Zion's **S**tone **C**hurch of **W**est **P**enn **T**wp.

45 Cemetery Rd, New Ringgold, PA 17960

570-386-5111 Prompt #4 (Leave a message)

All – You – Can – Eat Spaghetti Dinner

May 17, 2025

4:00pm - 7:00pm

Cost per ticket:

Adults (13 & up): \$12.00

Kids (12 - 3): \$6.00

Under 3: Free



Meal includes: Spaghetti with Meat Sauce or Spaghetti with just Sauce,
Bread, Salad, Dessert, and Drinks

Please purchase your ticket in advance to insure we have enough to serve
everyone. Deadline to preorder tickets is May 10th.

We will still sell tickets at the door, but it could be limited or sold out.

We will also have a 3 item raffle.

Come take a chance on one of our raffles.

All Proceeds will go to the Thomas E. Starzl

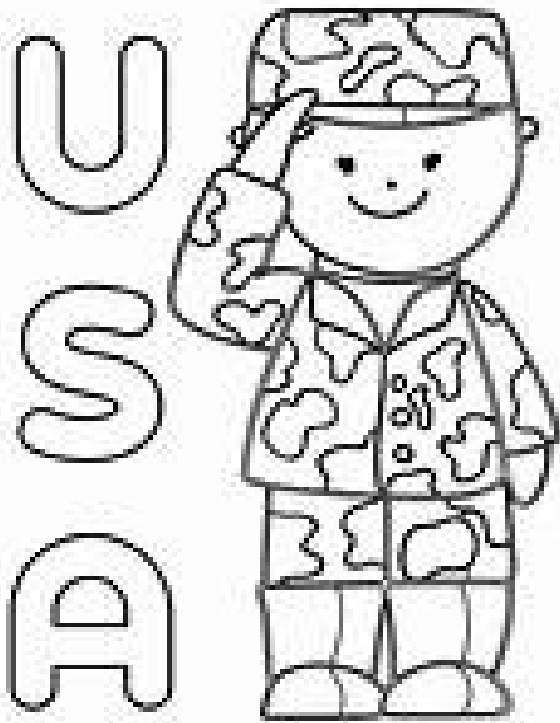
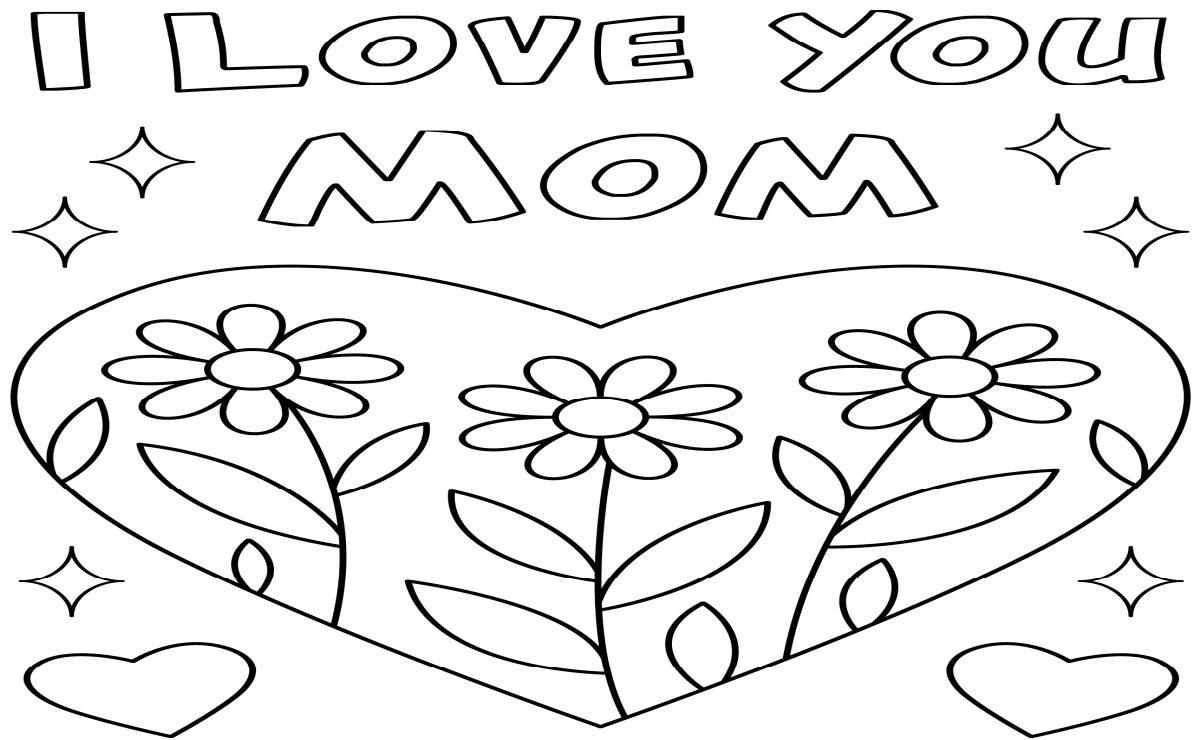
Transplantation Institute at UPMC Presbyterian Hospital

in Pittsburg to benefit their transplant department & help families that need
financial help with a transplant.



**Can call the church office at the above number or
you can call or text Charlotte Fritz at
570-952-4689 to reserve your tickets by May 10th.**

Zion's Stone Coloring Sheet





PNEC Vision Statement:

"United in Faith...Committed to Love...Created to Serve"

Penn Northeast Conference UCC, 431 Delaware Ave., Palmerton, PA 18071

www.pnec.org 610-826-3113

Conference Minister, Rev. Dr. Bonnie Bates bonnieb@pnec.org

Barbara Jennings barbaraj@pnec.org

Patty Rehrig pattyr@pnec.org

SEND ARTICLES TO BE INCLUDED TO pattyr@pnec.org

Bonnie's Letter

"Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says." (James 1:22 NIV)

Dear Friends,

Well, it's the week after Easter. Are you still carrying Easter joy with you, or have you forgotten the hope and joy that was reborn last week? It's really easy to get involved in all the tasks we must complete, all the work to be done, all the sadness in the news, all the personal challenges in our lives, and forget. We are the people of the Resurrection, people called to live into the Resurrection each and every day. What does that mean for you?

While I was preaching about living into the Resurrection at our New Beginnings Charge congregations last Sunday, I spoke about how we carry the joy of our faith and our belief into the world. Do people even know we are Christian? Is our faith-walk seen in our everyday lives? Can people recognize the Christian love in us and our beliefs beyond our wearing a cross or carrying a bible? I quoted some lyrics from a Contemporary Christian artist, Ryan Stevenson. I share them with you now,

"I talk about grace; I talk about love; I talk about faith; But some days I don't have enough. I talk about forgiveness; But still learning how to give it; Lord, I need your strength to live what I believe.

I want my life to preach; Every breath, every beat; I want my life to preach; When I'm strong, when I'm weak; Through valley lows and mountain highs. Every moment testifies; Further than my words could ever reach; I want my life to preach.

I talk about peace; And I talk about hope; I talk about serving others; But most days I don't. And I talk about freedom; But getting' lost in religion; Lord, give me strength to live what I believe...

Turn my days into your canvas; Let me stay open-handed; With a humble heart to serve the least of these. I want my faith to be in action; Let this flame of compassion; Be louder than every word I speak."

I can't think of better ways to live the joy of the resurrection, to live in our faith and our love than those expressed in this song. I don't know about you, but I truly want my life to preach – and not just because I am a preacher/teacher type of person, but because I want the world to know that Christianity lives in my heart and in my actions. Don't you want that as well? ~ Blessings, Bonnie



NORTHEASTERN PENNSYLVANIA SYNOD MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saying Yes to God: A Personal Witness to Licensed Lay Ministry

Written by: Michael Haspe, Licensed Lay Ministry Candidate

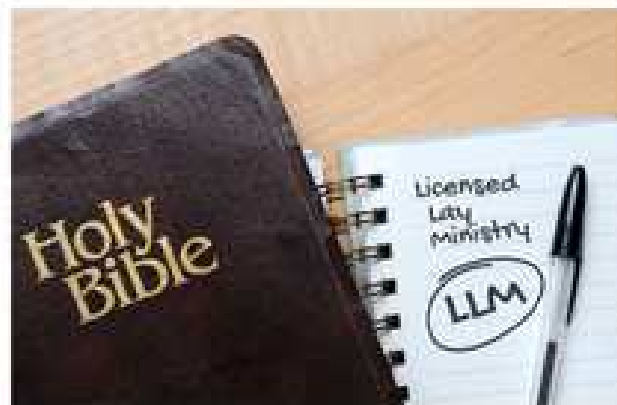
I am a lifelong member of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church of Tamaqua, PA, where I currently serve as the Christian Education Director. I felt my strongest pull to ministry during the pandemic. It was during the shutdown that God began to utilize me in new ways. I was one of four people—including the Pastor, camera operator, and organist—tasked to broadcast our services live. During this time, I learned to serve as a Cantor, Lector, and Communion Assistant, and I found I really enjoyed being a part of worship leadership. When the congregation came back, the anxiety I had previously experienced that kept me from serving (even though I really wanted to) was gone. I finally felt free to step into the roles God had been preparing me for all along.

Yet how did I get here? Near the end of 2020, I witnessed an unexplainable life-saving miracle. It was then I felt the urge to share my testimony and to preach. At the time, there was no Synodically Authorized Lay Minister (SALM) or Licensed Lay Minister (LLM) program in place, and I didn't feel called to rostered ministry. I wasn't sure what path was right for me, but the desire to be in deeper service was undeniable.

Then, in 2023, my partner of 19 years was diagnosed with Stage 4 colon cancer. My world collapsed. I had a good cry with my Pastor and told her that even though I trusted God, I was afraid. She encouraged me to go home and rest and assured me we would talk more the next day. The very next morning, she called me with news: the synod had approved the LLM program. I knew in that instant it was God commanding my attention.

It felt as though God was saying, "Michael, during this time of uncertainty and fear, YOU WILL FOCUS ON ME." I shared this with my Pastor, and no sooner did it come out of my mouth than my fear turned to calm. There aren't words to describe the sense of peace and clarity that followed.

So that's what I did. I enrolled in the LLM program and kept my eyes LASER focused on God. The anxiety didn't return. Late last year, my partner underwent major surgery to remove the cancer. The pathology report stunned the medical team—what had looked and behaved like Stage 4 cancer was downgraded to Stage 2. Today, my partner is cancer free. While doctors still can't explain it, I can. I had just witnessed a second miracle.





So that is why I am here, and that is why I am so passionate about the Licensed Lay Ministry program. It has given me a pathway to serve others and to share the good news of Jesus Christ, while I continue to discern whether rostered ministry might be the next step. For years, people in my church and community have said to me, “Michael, you are a Pastor.” And whether that becomes a career goal for me or not, this program enables me to explore ministry in meaningful ways. Through it, I can share the Gospel and lead others to Christ.

It’s no secret there is a shortage of Pastors. Being a Licensed Lay Minister allows me to serve in ways that are within my current gifts while also challenging me to grow in areas I may have once feared. LLMs can help address the pastoral shortage across our synod. No congregation is too large or too small to benefit from the presence of a lay minister. I believe the LLM program can be a catalyst to grow our churches, open new doors, and revitalize ministries.

The LLM retreats have been one of my favorite parts of this journey. The preaching retreat especially stands out. It provided me with practical tools to write and deliver sermons with confidence. I now feel my preaching is more focused and effective because of what I learned there. Pastor Peggy Wurtele has been a huge inspiration to me. Her motto—“Proclamation, Proclamation, Proclamation!”—encourages us to seize every opportunity to proclaim the Gospel and remind people that grace is FREE and abundant through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. As a perfectionist, I hold onto her other phrase too: “...and Jesus loves us anyway.” It helps me focus less on small details and more on the heart of the message. That reminder has been freeing and empowering.

I want to leave you with a few questions. Ask yourself honestly: “Do you love Jesus Christ? Do you believe in the free gift and promise of grace and eternal salvation? Do you love telling others about Jesus? Do you love people?” If you answered yes to any—or all—of these questions, then the LLM journey might be right for you. Talk to your Pastor or the LLM Coordinator. Take time to pray and discern if this is your next faithful step.

One excuse I frequently hear is, “I would love to do this, but I’m too old.” Let me tell you—you are NEVER too old to proclaim the Good News! Your ministry could change someone’s life. If you’re even a little bit curious about LLM, talk about it. Ask questions. You might be surprised where God is leading you. The most surprising thing I’ve learned is the impact one message can have. I’ve preached dozens of sermons, and the most humbling moments come when someone quietly tells me that something I said encouraged them, gave them hope, or inspired them to try something new. That’s the greatest reward of all.

Discover how Licensed Lay Ministry is equipping lay leaders for faithful service. Learn more at godslove.org/LLM, or email Licensed Lay Ministers Coordinator, Pastor Jira Albers at llm@nepsynod.org

DID YOU KNOW that your Mission Support helps fund areas of the synod like this one and many other important initiatives? Your contributions are making a significant impact and helping others grow in faith, supporting the synod’s lanes of Growing Young, Gaining Strength, and Going Beyond Death to Life, along with the directions of loving like Jesus, healing like Jesus, and engaging like Jesus. To learn more, visit godslove.org/missionsupport



Memorial Day 2025: Holiday is more than a barbecue, it remembers US Military members killed

[Memorial Day](#) is considered the unofficial start to summer — a long weekend with (hopefully) warm weather, a time for barbecues, graduation parties and picnics.

The holiday, however, is one of the most solemn that the United States observes. It honors those who gave their lives in service to this country.

Here's when we celebrate Memorial Day 2025, plus more on the origins of the holiday.

Memorial Day is a federal holiday mourning the loss of military personnel who died while serving in the U.S. Armed Forces, according to [History](#). A federal holiday since 1971, Memorial Day's history stretches back to the Civil War when it was known as Decoration Day.



May 30 was designated “for the purpose of strewing with flowers, or otherwise decorating the graves of comrades who died in defense of their country during the late rebellion, and whose bodies now lie in almost every city, village and hamlet churchyard in the land.”

Memorial Day got its start three years after the Civil War ended, on May 5, 1868, when the head of an organization of Union veterans — the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) — established Decoration Day as a time for the nation to decorate the graves of the war dead with flowers. Maj. Gen. John A. Logan declared it should be May 30, when it was thought that flowers would be in bloom all over the country. Even though numerous communities had been independently celebrating Memorial Day for years, the federal government declared Waterloo, New York, the official birthplace of Memorial Day. Waterloo first celebrated the holiday on May 5, 1866.

Should you thank a veteran on Memorial Day?

Thanking a veteran for their service is more appropriate for Veterans Day, the holiday in November to honor veterans for their service to the United States. "[I hope you're having a meaningful day](#)" might be one of the better things to say to a veteran.



ZION'S STONE CHURCH - MAY 2025 BIRTHDAY CALENDAR

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
				Marianne Blaschak		Tracy Oswald
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Lacey Beers	Gabriel Fritz Janie Miller	Dean Everett	Nikki Bailey	Payton Kurtz	Bryce Bailey Lauren Mateyak Tatiana Trexler	Connor Knowlan Donald Mikruk
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Kr Arner Johnny Kromer	Chase Rehrig Duane Ruch Bonnie Wagstaff	Daniel Clemson Scott Everett Logan Miller Melissa Moyer	Kaira Baker Ken Mateyak			Kirsten Miller Brittany Zehner
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
Dan Metzger II Dustin Miller	Jenny Balliet Jayne McLaughlin Derek Miller Novalee Reed Mary Karen Shoff		Eric Ballister Maria Clause	Brady Miller	Eva Mae Miller Sonny Zehner	Jean Hamm Jocelyn Shellhamer
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
Oliver Kressley		Joy Hauck Duane Schock			Paul Miller	Linda I Beibleheimer Kevin Kistler, Sr

ZION'S STONE CHURCH - MAY 2025 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
<p>***Please note Charlotte Fritz will be on Vacation from May 3 - 11 and also from May 21 - May 31 and will be recovering from foot surgery all summer long</p>				<p>Choir Rehearsals: 6:15pm - Handbell 6:45pm - Sr Choir</p>		
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<p>9:00am-Worship Service w/Holy Communion (Pew) 10:15am - Sunday School</p>				<p>Choir Rehearsals: 6:15pm - Handbell 6:45pm - Sr Choir</p>		
MOTHER'S DAY 11	12	13	14	15	16	17
<p>9:00am - Worship Service w/Young People's Time w/King's Kids Singing 10:15am - Sunday School</p> 	<p>6:30pm - Board Meeting</p>		<p>7:00pm - Memorial Day Band Rehearsal in the Auditorium at Zion's</p>	<p>Choir Rehearsals: 6:15pm - Handbell 6:45pm - Sr Choir (Last practice for Handbells)</p>		<p>9:00am - Setup for All You Can Eat 4:00pm - 7:00pm All You Can Eat Spaghetti Dinner 10:00am - Planning Meeting</p>
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
<p>9:00am - Worship Service 10:15am - Sunday School 11:00am - Newsletter Deadline 7:00pm - Youth Group Meeting</p>			<p>7:00pm - Memorial Day Band Rehearsal in the Auditorium at Zion's</p>	<p>Choir Rehearsal: 6:45pm - Sr Choir</p>		
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
<p>9:00am - Worship Service 10:15am - Sunday School 11:15am - Memorial Day Service at Zion's Stone</p>	<p>Memorial Day</p>			<p>No Choir Rehearsals until End of August</p>		