

**Mt. Zion Ev. Lutheran Church**

**320 Mt. Zion Dr.**

**Ripon, WI 54971**

***The Sheppard’s Pen***

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**February, 2024**

**The Lenten Season**



The Lenten Season is a penitential season marked with the color purple. Purple reminds us of royalty. It reminds us also of the purple robe Pontius Pilate had placed on Jesus when he was on trial and sentenced to death.

During this penitential season congregations follow customs that reflect that feeling. The joy that we have in Christ Jesus our Savior still fills our hearts during this season. Yet our joy is muted in expression as we reflect on the reason for our Savior’s journey to the cross and grave – our disobedience to our God.

For this reason, some congregations omit the singing of Alleluia and many of the more festive hymns during this season. Traditionally, Sundays are not considered part of Lent, and so some congregations will continue to sing alleluias on Sundays but not during midweek services. It is also a custom of many congregations to not have flowers on the altar during midweek services in Lent. Flowers may be placed on the altar on the Sundays to celebrate various anniversaries and in memory of our loved ones.

Sunday services focus on the life and ministry of our Savior. Midweek services focus on the Passion, the suffering of our Lord. Reading the Passion history of Jesus is often included in midweek services.

The first midweek service is Ash Wednesday. The date of Ash Wednesday moves because Easter coincides with Passover, the date of which follows the lunar calendar. There are six Wednesdays before Holy Week. Ash Wednesday gets its name from the custom of Christians to place ashes on the forehead as an outward reminder of repentance and faith in Christ. It is tradition for the ashes to be the palm branches from Palm Sunday of the previous year. Today, palm ashes may be easily purchased.

On the Wednesdays in Lent congregations often follow a Lenten series. Hymns and sermons reflect on the various events of our Savior’s passion while following a certain theme. It gives us an opportunity to focus on our Savior’s love for us as he willingly endured the pain and suffering for the sins of the whole world.

The Lenten Season culminates in Holy Week. The sixth Sunday in Lent is Palm Sunday which commemorates our Savior’s praise-filled entrance into Jerusalem on his way to the cross. The crowds shouted “Hosanna in the highest!” as Jesus rode upon a donkey. Thursday of Holy Week is called Maundy Thursday. Named after the Latin word “mandata” which means “command”, Maundy Thursday includes a few commands of our Savior. On this night of that week, our Savior commanded his disciples to love one another as he loved them. He instituted Holy Communion in which he gave his body and blood with the bread and wine as he commanded them to eat and drink and to do this in remembrance of him. On this Thursday he was betrayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. The next day of Holy Week is Good Friday. Good Friday is a day of sadness and darkness because on this day they tried Jesus and put him to death. But this is Good Friday because of our Savior’s words, “It is finished!” He fulfilled God’s plan to redeem the world through his suffering and death. And on this day he was buried. Good Friday seems like a bad day. But in view of the third day following our Savior’s death, this day is good for it is a day of victory.

Please join us on the Wednesdays of Lent as we follow the Savior’s suffering and death in our place. Join us for our Holy Week services as we follow the Savior to the cross and grave which could not hold him.

**WELS Pastoral Vacancy Update**

January 30, 2024

You may have noticed that the pastors of the WELS have been receiving divine calls more often in the past few years than previously. The reason for this is that in recent years we have had a shortage of men trained to serve as pastors. Some have retired after many years of serving congregations and in other pastoral positions synod-wide. Our synod has seen smaller classes of pastoral students at Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (WLS). This year’s graduating class at the seminary will provide 27 candidates for the pastoral ministry.

The current number of vacant pastoral positions is 164 which gives us about a 12% vacancy rate. Pastoral vacancies in the parish ministry (pastors serving in congregations) number 146. The remaining 18 pastoral positions are in the following areas: teaching/professor, retirement calls, foreign missions and a few other areas. Our Northern Wisconsin District of the WELS currently has 24 pastoral vacancies with 23 parish ministry positions. Pastors at this time may not ask for a divine call or be discontent in a current field of service, but may still receive one.

As a result of this level of vacancies, pastors in our synod are being asked to deliberate divine calls more often. Some congregations remain vacant after more than a year, and in some cases two years, before they receive their next pastor. We pray for these congregations as they continue the calling process that the Lord would provide them with their next pastor.

This update of our current pastoral vacancy situation has been described with numbers. We must also keep in mind that our Lord Jesus Christ is the head of the Christian Church and rules all things for her good. The divine call is a call issued by the Holy Spirit through a calling body, a gathering of believers in Christ. The Lord of the Church and the Holy Spirit promise to never leave or forsake his people and to work all things for our good. We cannot fully see at this time with our limited perspective all that God is working for our good. We sometimes can see some part of the good things God works for us but not all of them.

Congregations whose pastors often receive divine calls find the time of the pastors’ deliberations to be disquieting. Will the pastor stay or leave? Will we be the next vacant congregation? When these concerns arise, we simply repeat what the scriptures say: “What God ordains is always good.” He will not forsake us but continues to be with our congregations and pastors, and with our synodical and district leaders.

Whether the vacancies are many or few, the harvest is ripe but the workers are few. We can encourage young men to consider serving as a pastor in our church body and to attend MLC and WLS so they are trained when they are sent into the fields. We continue to ask the Lord of the Church to provide workers for his harvest fields.

**General Announcements**

**Mt. Zion Church Council**

These are the members of the church council for 2024. You may address any concerns to the appropriate council member.

**President:** Mike Meeker

**Vice President:** Ken Hielke

**Secretary:** Mark Roeder

**Treasurer:** Tom (TJ) Sitter

**Worship Elder:** Rick Niemuth

**Support Elder:** Rick Retelle

**Member Nurture Elder:** Gary Wichman

**Family Nurture Elder:** Tim Lynch

**Evangelism Elder:** DuWayne Wichman

**Pictorial Directory Update**

We will be taking the photos and addresses to Good Impressions here in Ripon to make our church directory. Cost estimate is approximately $5 per book. The final cost will be determined once the directories are finished. **If anyone would like a digital copy of your picture that Miya Grunert took of you with the background, please contact Miya at** ***miyagrunert@gmail.com******.***

**Bible Studies**

Monday evenings at 6:30pm we are looking at Luther’s Large Catechism; Tuesday mornings at 9:00am we are studying the book of Revelation; and Sunday mornings at around 10:15am we have begun a new series called “Influencing God’s Children.” Please join us for one or more of the classes!

**Greeters**

We would like to begin our greeter program again. If you are interested in being greeters for a few Sundays in 2024, please sign up on the sheet on the podium by the library.

**Sound System**

The components we ordered have now been installed. They include a mixer with monitor, a few new speakers to supplement the current ones, new microphones, and a new CD player. We have options for additional components if we need them in the future. Thank you for your contributions.

**End of Year Statements**

The 2023 offering statements have been finished and placed in the mailboxes at church.

**Private Communion**

Pastor Sheppard is happy to offer private communion to those who prefer it; simply email him (revmikesheppard@gmail.com) or call him (920-745-0883) to schedule a time.

**Online Streaming**

We are livestreaming our services on Facebook Live Sundays at 9:00am. Services will also be uploaded to Rumble (Mt. Zion’s channel is ***mtzionripon***) and the link will be posted on the church website in the VIDEOS subheading under the MEDIA tab. Services will still be available on DVD. Please feel free to contact Pastor Sheppard with questions.

**Christian Family Solutions**

*Christian Family Solutions*is a WELS affiliated organization providing counselling services to the hurting. Both in person and video appointments are available for those in need by contacting CFS directly. Mt. Zion is a partner with them through the *Member Assistance Program (MAP).* Our church has a fund dedicated to assisting our members with the cost of these services. If financial assistance is needed, Pastor Sheppard notifies Christian Family Solutions and assistance will be given towards the cost of appointments. Video counseling by computer may be conducted at the church when necessary. For more information, visit [**https://christianfamilysolutions.org**](https://christianfamilysolutions.org)**.**

**Helping Hands**

If you are interested in helping someone with technology, helping give rides to appointments in Ripon, Berlin, Oshkosh, or Fond du Lac, please let Joanne Gregor know. If you or someone you know needs assistance, please contact Lisa Tremore at 920-229-1297, Tammy Niemuth at 920-299-0240 or Joanne Gregor at 920-896-1518. **If you need assistance of any kind, please do not feel like you are imposing; this is why Helping Hands exists!**



Since 2005, children have been supporting the Lutheran Women’s Missionary Society (LWMS) Kids C.A.R.E. (care about reaching everyone with the gospel) program. Through Kids C.A.R.E. our children learn about and support our synod’s home and world mission projects. Mt. Zion has participated in Kids C.A.R.E. since 2013. This year’s Kids C.A.R.E. project will be a home mission program, Missionary Kids Retreats. This year we will support our WELS missionary kids with our prayers and offerings to help them attend these much-needed annual retreats. You can donate to this mission using the blank line on your offering envelopes. Please consider giving an offering to Missionary Kids Retreat as well as keeping this year’s Kid C.A.R.E. project in your prayers.

**Second Impressions**

**Store Hours**

Tuesday thru Friday **9** AM – **6** PM

Monday and Saturday **9** AM – **3** PM

**Donation Accepted Times**

 Monday **10** AM – **3** PM

Tuesday thru Friday **10** AM – **4** PM

 Saturday **10** AM – **3** PM

**New Items Arrive Daily**...**Come** **Over And Check Them Out!**

Brand new for the winter season are handmade children’s mittens for $3. They are made of fleece in many delightful patterns.

**Donations:**  Thank you to everyone who has so generously donated to our store! We can always use any type of donation. Items ACCEPTED include, but are not limited to: Furniture (Please call ahead before donating large furniture!), In-Season Clothing, Purses, Shoes, Jewelry, Tools & Hardware, Pictures & Frames, Home Décor, Christmas & Seasonal/Holiday Items, Arts & Crafts, Toys, Kitchen & Glassware, Books, Linens/Towels/Sheets.

**Student Needs Closet**

The Ripon Area School District has a Student Needs Closet to help all students in grades 4K to 12 have access to hygiene products such as soap, shampoo, toothbrushes, combs/brushes, and hair ties just to name a few items. These items are available to them that they may not have access to them at home. Under Ripon Area School District’s Director of Pupil Services, Emmy Jess, Miya Grunert has volunteered her time organizing the closet and found that there is a need for several items. Mt. Zion can help support the Student Needs Closet with donations.

There are two boxes near the water fountain (by the office) where donations can be placed. Each month there will be a list of items that are needed for the closet. Information about the items for the closet will be in the weekly bulletins, as well as the monthly newsletter.

By supporting and collecting donations for The Student Needs Closet, we can help the students of the Ripon Area School District, help Emmy Jess (and Miya) maintain and stock the closet; along with using this as an opportunity to serve the Lord in our community.

Thanks so much for your support and donations to the Ripon Area School District Students Needs Closet.

**Items needed for the Ripon Area School District Student Needs Closet**

**High Priority:**

Mens’ shampoo

Mens’ body wash

Mens’ deodorant

Womens’ deodorant

Bar soap

**Also need:**

Girls’ shampoo

Feminine products

Body wipes and/or baby wipes

Toothbrushes

Chapstick

Fabric freshener (travel size)

Band-aids

**Could also use:**

Kleenex

Toothpaste

Combs/brushes

Body mist/spray

Travel size laundry detergent

**Pathways to Christ: *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. Hebrews 13:8***This is the theme passage for the 2024 Pathways to Christ Women's Retreat held in Oshkosh, WI on March 1-3, 2024. We are pleased to announce that registration for 2024 Pathways to Christ Retreat is now open!  Please go to our website <https://pathwaystochrist.org/>  for more information about speakers, topics, accommodations, and more! On our website you have the choice to download and print a PDF registration form to mail in, or there is an additional link to our eventbrite link to register online.  Please reach out via email at pathwaystochristretraet@gmail.com with any questions.

**Men of His Word Conference**

This year’s theme – Built To Serve - is based off of Galatians 5:13 *You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.*

Do you ever wonder if you’re the right man for the job? I think I’ve spent most of my life trying to figure out what I’m good at doing. We all want to be good at something. Whether we realize it or not, God has given each of us the exact abilities we need to do the work he has planned out for us. And, Galatians 5:13 reminds us that Christ has set us free so that we can use those abilities to serve one another in love. Join us at Men of His Word to learn how you are Built to Serve in all of the different vocations to which God has called you.

The 15th Annual MOHW Conference will be held at the Oshkosh Waterfront Convention Center in Oshkosh on **Saturday, February 17, 2024.** Additional details and online registration are available at www.menofhisword.org . The registration fee is $65 for adults and $35 for youth – these rates increase to $80 and $40 respectively after January 29th. Please join us for a day of worship, praise and fellowship in God’s Word!

**On The lighter Side**



Randy and Tammy Weckwerth 2/2/2022

Maurice and Debra Picchiotino 2/3/1984

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| --- | --- |
| Joan Stibb | 2/1 |
| Julia Luther | 2/3 |
| Heidi Eilertson | 2/4 |
| Myles Pierce | 2/6 |
| Jerome Witkowski | 2/6 |
| Mary Clement | 2/7 |
| Samuel Jung | 2/7 |
| Todd Zellmer | 2/7 |
| Shirley Erdman-Schroeder | 2/10 |
| Miya Grunert | 2/10 |
| Samantha Storzer | 2/11 |
| Dianne Olsen | 2/13 |
| Arjeta Rushani | 2/13 |
| Bernice Ziebell | 2/14 |
| Elaine Schmudlach | 2/15 |
| Megan Storzer | 2/16 |
| Eunice Lemiesz | 2/19 |
| Ronald Lemiesz | 2/22 |
| Ben Isaac | 2/23 |
| Derek Chitwood | 2/24 |
| Kenneth Hielke | 2/25 |
| Avis Lindeman | 2/29 |

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**Mt. Zion Messenger**

February, 2024

**Mt. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church**

**320 Mt. Zion Dr. Ripon, WI 54971**

**Pastor Michael Sheppard**

**Church Email: mountzionripon@gmail.com**

Church Website: www.mtzionripon.org

Pastor’s Office: 920-748-9734

Pastor’s Email: revmikesheppard@gmail.com

**Newsletter Articles**

Deadline for articles for the March edition is February 23, 2024. Please either give news/articles to Jo Meeker or email them to the church office at **mountzionripon@gmail.com****.**

***We are always looking for human interest news from our members! If there is any incorrect information, please let us know that as well.***