



The Mountain Top Messenger

ZION LUTHERAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH, ASHLAND, WI JANUARY 2024

Welcome to 2024, Wow, it seems strange to be saying that. Still having fun trying to rap my head around the whole 2000's thing. I miss the 70's and 80's. Oh well, no going back, ever forward. Last month I spoke on Advent, and how we were preparing to celebrate the first Advent, the incarnation of our Lord and Savior in human form, coming to earth to accomplish what we couldn't accomplish for ourselves. And He did it! Through His life, death, and resurrection, He has achieved salvation for those of us who believe in Him and what He has done for us.

So, with that being said, now that Advent is finishing up, welcome to Epiphany! If you look at good old Miriam-Webster you will see among other things, epiphany described as; an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure. Now that is the uncapitalized form of the word, MW says if it is capitalized, Epiphany, the meaning becomes this: January 6 observed as a church festival in commemoration of the coming of the Magi as the first manifestation of Christ to the Gentiles or in the Eastern Church in commemoration of the baptism of Christ.

Or, if you grew up in the Williams family, where Epiphany was called Russian Christmas. As children, we loved Russian Christmas, who wouldn't, it was like Christmas take 2, we would go over to grandma's house and get to open another present. Now my grandmother wasn't Russian, however she was Ukrainian and was raised in the Russian Orthodox (Eastern) Church. It wasn't until later in my life when I developed a better understanding of what Epiphany really was. I think maybe in your life you have to have an epiphany or two to develop a real appreciation of Epiphany.

Now one of the things that I have come to realize is that life as a Christian, is all about Epiphany. As I have grown in my faith, in my study of God's Word, in my sharing of God's Word, I am continually encountering illuminating discoveries, amazing realizations, and remarkable disclosures, all of them related to Our Lord, the Triune God, and what He has done for me through Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I know we experience them in our Monday morning Bible study, those ah-ha moments, when a passage that may you have read maybe a hundred times, suddenly breaks forth with a new and better understanding of what the Lord is trying

(continued on next page)

(from previous page)

to say. Those types of Epiphanies
week! And the best part, as long
continue to happen.

As a pastor, a teacher, one of the
me, "thank you, I had never heard
"Now I understand". One of my cl
in your love and understanding o
for you, so that you may grow in
can share that love of Christ with

share the Gospel, you can do it each and every day simply by what you do, what you say,
and through the example of your life. People are watching, people are listening, people are
longing for what you have. Share it. Help them to have an Epiphany! Be there to answer
their questions, to tell them what gives you hope in such a hopeless world. We, my friends
are assured of Salvation, because of our faith we have the Epiphany, We know, Christ has
died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again. And we wait for that coming with the sure and
certain truth that Christ will take us to be with Him forever. Amen, Come Lord Jesus, Come.

My friends I pray you have a happy and prosperous New Year.

May the Lord bless you and keep you, may the Lord make His face shine upon you and be
gracious to you, may the Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.

Pastor Rick
*The God who breathed this world alive
And sustains it day by day
Whose hands flung stars into space
And controls our destiny
Says, "Do not be afraid, for I am with
you."
The God who filled the ocean depths
And set tides on their way
Who caused mountains to be raised up
And rainbows to display
Says, "I have called you by name, you are
mine."
The God who made the fertile earth
And seed within to sow
Whose artistry creates butterflies*





ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH
1111-11TH AVE WEST
ASHLAND, WI 54806

Sunday Worship Service 9:00am live streamed
Wednesday Evening Service 6:30pm
Sunday School - 1st - 8th grade Sunday 8:45am
Bible Studies
Sunday 10:15am Monday 10:00am

Pastor Rick Williams - 715-209-0479

Office Hours: M /T/Th 9-5 Wed. 12-8 Fri. off

Please call ahead if you need to speak with Pastor.

Office Secretary Lynn Ladd 715-682-6075 Office Hours M/W/Th 8:30-2:30
Days and times may change.

Church President: John Pruss 715-292-4825 **Head Elder:** Darryl Warren 715-492-0488

Little Friends of Jesus Child Care Center: 715-682-5185

LFOJ Administrator: JoAnn Martkonis 715-682-6075

Website www.zionashland.org **E-mail** secretary@zionlutheranashland.com

PRAYERS for

**Homebound, Assisted
Living, Nursing Home**

Those who aren't able to attend common worship that they would find comfort knowing that the Lord is with them.

Ingrid Pocernich

Arlene Zimmerman

Violet Basina

PRAYERS FOR PROTECTION

For our full-time troops and public servants, for travel, missionaries, and for peace and protection for families.

David Wright

PRAYERS FOR HEALTH AND HEALING

For good test results, treatment, positive thinking, healing, and comfort during cancer treatments, for those suffering from addiction, mental illness and for healing, strength, comfort, and peace for family we pray for:.



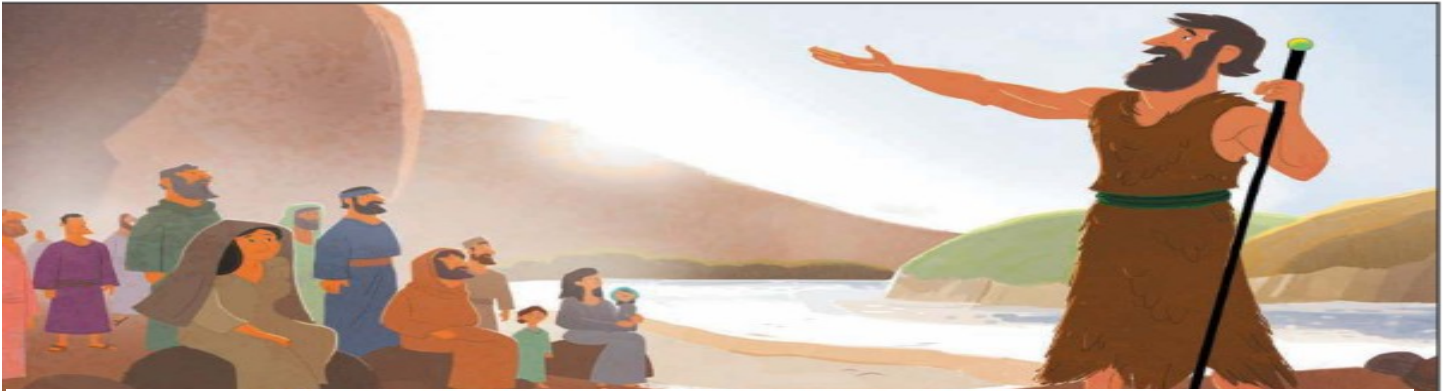
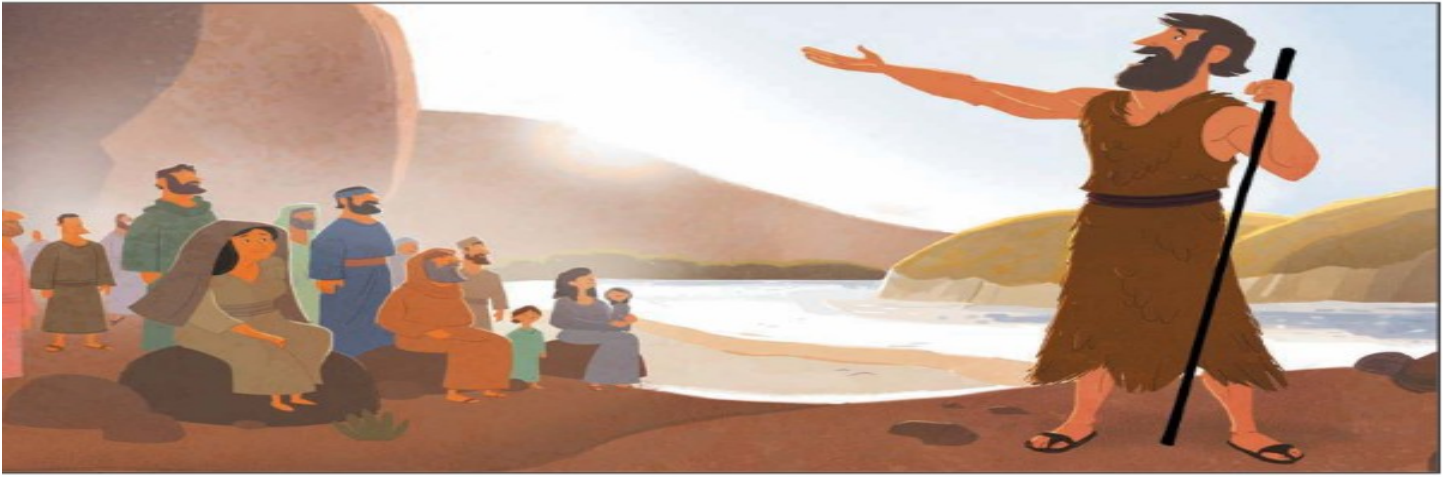
*Lord,
Hear Our
Prayer*

Brad Prill
Vi Basina
James Fletcher
Sheryl Hildebrandt
Harold Larson
Diane Beiersdorff
Linda Stenroos
Steve Key
Tim Erickson
Patty Hmielewsk
Barb Maki
Dale Nelson

Riley Bretting
Mike Trimble
Jamie Klema
Mike Ariens
Carol Schuelke
Karen Piff
Molly Colgrove
Linda Parrish
Cory Nyara
Chuck Sandor
John Belany
Eric and Norma Oman
and those in our hearts



Homemade
GIFTS MADE EASY



John the Baptist Spot the Differences

Compare the picture on the top with the picture on bottom. Circle the 12 things that are different.



WINTER NIGHTS

BLOW, wind blow!
 Drift the flying snow!
 Send it twirling, whirling overhead!
 There's a bedroom in a tree
 Where, snug as snug can be,
 The squirrel nests in his cosy bed.

Shriek, wind, shriek!
 Make the branches creak!
 Battle with the boughs till break o' day!
 In a snow-cave warm and tight,
 Through the icy winter night,
 The rabbit sleeps the peaceful hours away.

Call, wind, call,
 In entry and in hall,
 Straight from off the mountain white and wild!
 Soft purrs the pussy-cat
 On her little fluffy mat,
 And beside her nestles close her furry child.

Scold, wind, scold,
 So bitter and so bold!
 Shake the windows with your tap, tap, tap!
 With half-shut, dreamy eyes
 The drowsy baby lies
 Cuddled closely in his mother's lap.

(MATTHEW 2:1-12)

U P O D P W H U F Z W E M T O B C B M Q C Y M P T G B Z A C
G U H D B Q A Q O H W H U W E J V B Z N M A N L F B K U D N
I Y S Z Q B U T J K Z T B I P H U K B R P Q Q J H I M I P U
C F S Z D I U H W T S L S W I S E M E N M A R D D V I J U K
E K R L J T F T S T S U E H K T M M T U L O U D R S U L K S
U T O O I A T R A K O I J J J J Y Z P K C Y M R S M B M I U
B G V W C L T R A R A W R D F Y R B Z B S E E M M K W P B N
M G N H T B D T S N K Q M H Y R R I F I G A S J C I V B R E
K E G Q C Z D R I E K N G U C D H Z V F E P I H S R O W Q S
U Y D I J Z Q R A N U I O O T C B F F W Y E Z L U R K E I B
Y G P L W N C W G C N I N L W G N Z H L B Q P P R K G C J T
Y M K H Y K U P W V U S V C U S H B N J E U J D S Q P H L I
R Q S T J O J N A C D V S O E Q B D E B T T H E J Y H M J L
F H P Y T B K K F C L U S U G N A K E B H V D L L C K B V E
H V P O N H S B U H U U P U S U S B M K L S C B P Z H I R I
E V R A A F M C T R F A T I H E U E J J E E U U B A C V R A
L G B V S V J D J E L D W I B M J U Q K H T U O N K O M K K
M S B O L I T W O E Y D B B V J V Y V U E K S R S R V T J Q
G N O C R O A K M M R W H R S Q A E E M M N Y T L V N Q S Y
M B S A P N A I J Q H U J W U L E E V B U B J O P Z J V F R
B K L L U N U E K N B T S G N I K J V D W Y G L H Y L U Q B
P K K O T H E P G Y O L Y A B J I A L O I Z A T L E D G V T
M O W Z N I N I H M I A K G L T S V A R A A K P Q H R B B P
W J V M D U Q Y G A R O P T H E G K I E C B R N U Z Z D R K
N Q J F R A B B D S F A G K U W M U L H D U B R I C B O B Z
G S B M A F N B T V Y P K W Q K J O R L L E N A C S Y N I O
K P W Q Z F A S V Y B A G I T M P Z I Y P D Y P C G A Z U V
B M E S E T A P B K D D P U P L Z H U R A K N L M I E F Q L
Y B L Q M E Y P G W F Y S M L U C B U T I G M Y R F M N H C
K B V V D Q Q Y C L B S O F J G F A C T E C Q M X L X X C Y

**BETHLEHEM
BORN
CHILD
CHRIST
EAST
FRANKINCENSE**

**GOLD
HEROD
JERUSALEM
JESUS
KING**

**MYRRH
STAR
TROUBLED
WISEMEN
WORSHIP**

Two girls have the same parents and were born at the same hour on the same day of the same month, but they are not twins. How can this be possible?

The day before yesterday, Chris was 7 years old. Next year, she'll turn 10. How is this possible?

.What kind of band never plays music?

What can travel all around the world without leaving its corner?

I have branches, but no fruit, trunk, or leaves. What am I?

What has a neck but has no head?

A Daily Prayer Tip to Beat Work Stress and Anxiety by Jeff Japinga

Try this daily prayer habit to make your workday more productive.

“Therefore, I tell you, whatever you ask in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” —Mark 11:24 (ESV)

I ran breathlessly into the meeting room, quickly scanning for an empty chair. I was late...again. “Sorry, sorry,” I said...again.

I don’t try to be late for meetings. Really! I check my calendar first thing every morning, so I know what is on the day’s agenda. I lay out folders and other necessary papers in advance, so they’re easy to find. I even have a reminder that pops up on my computer and on my phone fifteen minutes before an appointment.

So what’s the problem? I also have this little habit of trying to squeeze in one more e-mail response or one more phone call or a few more paragraphs of that report in those last fifteen minutes. But then “one more” becomes “two more” or what I’m doing takes more time than I thought it would, and I’m scrambling.

Thank goodness I have a colleague who’s given me a way to finally beat my late-to-meeting habit “Do exactly what you’re doing now, but when that fifteen-minute alert goes off, stop doing and close your laptop.”

“But what a waste of fifteen minutes,” I said. “That’s when I do an e-mail check.” “Waste of time?” he responded. “Unless you use those minutes instead of time about to do, the people doing it, and those it will affect.”

What an idea! Now I not only get to meetings on time, I get there with a clear mind both mentally and spiritually. I hope this work devotional and prayer helps you.

Grant me the wisdom, God, to steward Your gift of time in faithful and diligent service.



| | | | | | | | |
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| | | 20 | 3 | 23 | | 12 | 16 |
| | 12 | | | | 16 | | |
| 5 | | | | | 24 | | |
| 41 | | | | | | | |
| 3 | | | 13 | | | 11 | |
| | | 24 | | | | | |
| | 17 | | | 10 | | | |
| | | | 23 | | | | 16 |
| | 16 | | | | 11 | | |
| | 14 | 5 | | | 17 | | |
| 42 | | | | | | | |
| | | | 22 | | | | |
| 10 | | | | | | | |

KAKURO RULES

Just like in sudoku, fill in the grid with the digits from 1 to 9. Each group of digits must add up to the number that is just to the left or above it. No group can repeat the same digit twice.

They were not born in the same year.

Today is January 1st. Yesterday, December 31st, was Chris’s 8th birthday. On December 30th, she was still 7. This year she will turn 9, and next year, she’ll turn 10.

*A rubber band
A stamp.
Bank.
Guitar.*

RIDDLE

ANSWERS



ghter Benefits Us OOD

g way toward making most of us feel better, but is there a spiritual

ee in the kitchen and wondering how I would get through the day,
y down, when Tony's picture toppled from the mantle in the family room.
died two years earlier, that gold-framed photo—Tony posing with his
g. That wasn't all that was happening. Sometimes the TV would turn on
feeling that Tony was still with me. Was it just the wishful thinking of a
e.

t off and put it back in place. I stared out the window that flanked the
ly he really were still here. I needed him now more than ever. It had
rs of my life. Not only had Tony died of liver failure. My mom died
en came more bad news. The night before, my brother called. He'd
been planning on moving into my spare room. Not anymore.

"I have cancer, Patricia," he told me on the phone. "It's terminal."

This wasn't how I'd pictured my golden years. Tony and I had had big plans. I was a photographer and drug addiction counselor. Tony was a Vietnam vet who'd risen through the ranks to become a master chief petty officer in the Navy. We'd moved around a lot, every three years to a new naval base. It didn't matter where we lived as long as we were together. After Tony retired, we decided to settle in one place for good. Tony was a country boy who loved nothing more than biscuits with gravy and Hank Williams. We moved into a farmhouse on 55 acres in north Georgia. I imagined a lifetime of sipping sweet tea on the back porch, while Tony spun yarns about coon hunting. His dream was to raise champion hunting dogs. Meanwhile, I had my heart set on getting a sweet little Yorkie.

"Can't I talk you into a beagle or Lab?" Tony said, poking fun at my choice of a dog, one that could fit in my handbag. Yorkies weren't exactly farm dogs. But I'd wanted one since I was a kid.

"You enjoy your hounds," I said. "I'm getting a Yorkie."

We had so many plans, so many dreams. But some months after we'd moved in, I found Tony on the porch, looking unsettled. "Doc says my liver is failing," he said. "I'll need a transplant."

Like many soldiers who'd served in Vietnam, Tony had contracted hepatitis C and been exposed to Agent Orange. In my eyes, he'd always been invincible—a larger-than-life Southern gentleman, as tough as they come. I didn't want to believe he could die. For eight months, we waited for a donor match. My mom, meanwhile, was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. I stayed up night after night, researching both Tony and Mom's conditions, hoping to find some detail the doctors might've missed. Finally, Tony got a transplant. He recovered sooner than expected and was home in no time. But the victory was short-lived. Two months later, Tony suffered a massive blood clot and died. He was only 60. And Mom was gone too.

Our farmhouse, which had once been so lively and filled with laughter, was eerily quiet. So dark and empty. There was no one to greet me when I came home from work. No one to sit with on the back porch. No one to walk with around our property. These were the saddest two years of my life. And now my brother was sick too. I didn't want to go through another battle all alone. I didn't want to watch another person I loved die. I stared out the window at the rain, which was coming down even heavier now. I was about to head back to the kitchen when I happened to notice movement. Something small and furry emerged from the woods in the backyard. It trotted right up to the house.

I set my coffee cup on the counter, grabbed my raincoat and dashed outside. The animal darted back into the woods. I knelt and waited, staying calm. A minute later, a dog came running out. He pressed against my knees and looked up at me. He was shivering, his brown fur matted and covered in mud. But there was no mistaking him.

A Yorkie. The kind that could fit in a handbag. I stared at the dog in amazement. Yorkies were relatively rare, an expensive breed. My house was surrounded by 300 acres of woods and farmland

Experience Everyday Miracles by Sabra Ciancanelli Nature's anomalies call out the beauty in everything around us.

I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works. —Psalm 139:14 (ESV)

A flash of white zoomed down the walnut tree and across the lawn. I stared trying to figure out what I was seeing—a white rat? No, the tail was wrong. It looked like a squirrel. A white squirrel? Watching closer, I yelled for Tony or the boys for their opinion. *What the heck is it?*



The boys came first. They looked out, said, “Yeah, I see it, a white squirrel,” and walked away. I tried to tell them the uniqueness of the situation, that it isn’t every day you see an albino squirrel. I told them I’ve been on this earth for decades and it’s the first one I’ve ever seen and, if I were a betting person I’d say I’m not likely to see another.

Tony came to the window. His eyes widened. “That’s something,” he said. I watched the squirrel run up and down an oak and then disappear in the knot of a maple.

Nature’s anomalies feel sacred. Their differences call out the beauty in everything around us. Their existence seems to say, *I’m special, but everything else is, too. Look, look at that crow, hear the way his call sounds like “mama-mama.” And that tree over there, towering over the house, that started as a seed. The dandelions, yellow now, will later give children pause to blow on them and wish. All day long that little white squirrel helped me see the extraordinary in the ordinary, and I am blessed to be a witness.*

Great Creator, the world is filled with so many wonders. Forgive me if I forget to notice and thank You for today’s “white squirrel,” a heavenly messenger to call out the miraculous all around me.

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A Yorkie. The kind that could fit in a handbag. I stared at the dog in amazement. Yorkies were relatively rare, an expensive breed. My house was surrounded by 300 acres of woods and farmland, without another house for miles. So, what was this dog doing on my property? How had he survived in woods full of coyotes?

I carried him into the house and dried him off. The Yorkie made himself right at home. He curled up at my feet on the porch. He followed me from room to room in the house. And I swear he cracked a doggie smile when I played Hank Williams. The dog had no collar, no tags. I asked around in town. Posted his photo online. Nobody had lost a Yorkie. No one came looking for him. He was mine to keep. I named him Hank. He never left my side.





DECEMBER LFOJ NEWSLETTER

Happy December! 2024 will be here before we know it!

Here is an update from the center for the month of December!

TOTVILLE NEWS: Tis the season!

The children have heard The Christmas Story often this month. We have been singing "Away in a Manger, In a Little Stable," and "Give me oil in my Lamp" along with our usual favorites.

Besides the story of Jesus's birth, Daniel and the Lions as well as Joseph and his Brothers are other Bible stories that we have read and learned about.

They have all been doing a great job of picking up toys and sharing. It's wonderful to see the little ones learning things like this from the older children in our room.

Happy birthday to Jurek on December 20th! He is one year old and has started walking, doing a good job of keeping up with his friends.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all!

"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth, peace to those on whom His favor rests." Luke 2:13-14

-Denise and Desiree



LEARNER LANE: Merry Christmas from the Learner Room!

We have had such fun learning about Jesus's birth, coloring and making Christmas Ornaments! We love singing songs like "This Little Light of Mine" and "I'm in the Lord's Army"

We have played outside A LOT since it has been so beautiful! Isn't God's Creation the best?

Our learners are excited to spend time with their families, eat candy, and get presents during the coming weeks!

-Nikki, Tressa and Jane

UPDATES: We have gotten some money donated from multiple sources! This is going to allow us to update the center and get some much needed materials! We are so thankful for the generous donations from church members and those around our community!

Looking for a way to help? We are always in need of donations, clothing, and supplies for the center. Please reach out to our administration or staff if you want more information about what is needed at LFOJ.

PARENT REMINDERS: Please try to get us your schedules the week before. That way, we can schedule the appropriate amount of staff during the week.

Tuition rates are increasing. We sent out a letter as well as a new tuition fee schedule. Please fill this out by the end of December. Thank you!

We will be closed Monday, January 1st, 2024 for New Year's Day.

God Bless,

Tressa Groom
LFOJ Director

JoAnn Martikonis
LFOJ Administrator

LFOJ – Parents are struggling to keep working with the rising costs of living. Those who work need daycare. A week of daycare costs \$206, that's \$832 for 20 days. We're looking for "guardian angels": to help some of those families that are struggling with finances. See the bulletin board by the cloak room. Thank you for your thoughtfulness and giving.

Zion Lutheran Church Council

December 18, 2023

Call to Order – Darryl Warren, Head Elder

Opening Devotion – Darryl Warren

Roll Call – John Pruss, President Darryl Warren, Elder & Education

 Nick Jarvela, Trustees Jule Jarvela, Secretary

 Lisa Guski, Andy Pruss, Treasurer

 Pastor Williams Joann Martikonis, LFOJ

Approval of Minutes – 1- Lisa Guski 2- Nick Jarvela MMC

Pastor's Report - Visitations before Christmas of shutins

Approval of Treasurer's Report 1- Nick Jarvela 2- Darryl Warren MMC

Approval of Agenda – One addition 1- Lisa Guski 2- Nick Jarvela MMC

Board Reports

Elders – None

Trustees -Inspections made, new janitor doing good job, sanctuary lights will be changed in new year, all trustees staying on

Financial Secretary - Tami Thimm trained and will assume job in 2024

LFOJ – new classroom set up in lower level will new furniture purchased with gift, raised rated \$3.00/day, beginning Feb. 2024 limiting age to 5

Evangelism – Harvest dinner, boxes to college students, waiting on directory

Education – Completed Confirmation, new class begins October 2024

Official Acts

Confirmation – 12-23-2023

Cadence Colby, Jeffrey Guski, John Truchon, Sophia Truchon, Eli Wickman

New Members

Frederick & Andrea Dollen, Andrew Dollen, Linda Dehnke, Joann Martikonis

Old Business – None

New Business

All Memorial Committee members have resigned. Pastor will write article for newsletter and bulletin to look for new members

2024 budget was presented. Members were asked for any changes to 2024 year

Committees and Boards need to submit additions& deletions of members and needs before Annual Meeting in February

Regional Hospice requested use of the Church for monthly meetings and yearly training session. Nominate to approve 1- Lisa Guski 2- Nick Jarvela MMC

JoAnn Martikonis, LFOJ requested approval for an “Angel Board” to give members of Zion the opportunity to give financial assistance for children whose parents are having temporary financial difficulties. 1- Lisa Guski 2- Darryl Warren MMC

Adjournment - 1- Lisa Guski 2- Darryl Warren MMC

Next meeting - January 15, 2024

Closed with the Lord's Prayer

Respectfully submitted, Jule Jarvela, Secretary

Regional Hospice grief support groups meet monthly and also have additional spring and fall six-week group meetings. Our grief support groups are open to anyone in the community that has lost a loved one and is looking for support in sharing with others who understand loss. They are offered at no charge and facilitated by our staff. Participants do not need to have received our hospice support – the groups are open to the community

Monthly meeting

3rd Wednesday of every month from 1:00-2:30pm (starts January 17th, then February 21st, and so on through each month of the year)



Suzanne Ballantyne, MSW

Director of Social Services

sballantyne@regionalhospice.org

Regional Hospice Services

1913 Beaser Ave
Ashland, WI 54806

(715) 685-5151

www.regionalhospice.org




Celebrating 30 Years of Caring For Our Community

January

2024

| SUN | MON | TUES | WED | THURS | FRI | SAT |
|--|---|--|--|--|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Elders Dec. 31 9am Darryl Jan 17 Darryl | Jan. 21 Doug | Jan.3 John P Jan 24 John S | Jan. 7 Scott Jan. 28 Andy | Jan. 10 Andy Jan. 31 Scott | Jan. 14 Randy Feb. 4 John P | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| 7 8:45am Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 10:15am Bible Study 2:00pm LGP | 8 10:00am Bible Study Dartball 7pm At Salem 2 | 9 1:00pm Sewing Circle | 10 6:30pm Worship Service | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 14 8:45am Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 10:15am Bible Study 2:00pm Mellen | 15 10:00am Bible Study Dartball 7pm At Messiah | 16 | 17 1:00pm Hospice 6:30pm Worship Service | 18 Winkel 9am LGP | 19 | 20 |
| 21 8:45am Sunday School 9:00am Worship Service 10:15am Bible Study 2:00pm LGP | 22 10:00am Bible Study 5:30pm Council Mtg. Dartball 7pm Zion vs. Presbyterian | 23 1:00pm Sewing Circle | 24 6:30pm Worship Service | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 28 9:00am Worship Service 10:15am Bible Study | 29 10:00am Bible Study Dartball 7pm Zion vs. Methodist | 30 | 31 6:30pm Worship Service | Annual Voters' Meeting will be held in February. More info coming soon. | | |



Altar Guild
24
15-682-4817
15-292-8392

