

Zionite Newsletter

SUMMER 2020
ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR

Hello Church!

To say that I miss seeing all of your faces is an understatement. Preaching to a camera is not, and will never be, the same as preaching with all of you. Debby Williams shared a photo the other day from last year when Deanna Roberts brought in a giant sock monkey stuffed animal, and put it in between John and Jeff. And I remember walking down the aisle when either preaching or reading the scripture and nearly bursting into laughter (it took everything I had NOT to laugh). And I miss times like that! I miss the kids all rushing into church at 9:05. I miss the hugs and the fellowship. I miss seeing everyone catch up and have genuine caring conversations with one another.

I'm also thankful that this is all happening in the year 2020. Imagine if this happened 10 years ago. We would have been able to do some form of online worship, but not as many people would be connected online. We are blessed by the access to online worship, something that most of our members can tune into and enjoy. So I try to pay attention to those little blessings.

But I also have a fear. I fear that as I see our number of people watching at 10am decline to nearly half what it was in the fall, I fear that that people are forgetting to spend time in worship. Of course I know it's summer, so I hope that's the reason, but I fear that people are forgetting the importance of Sunday worship. And yet when those fearful thoughts pop into my head, I think about Hebrews 13:6 where the Apostle Paul says, "So we can say with confidence, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can anyone do to me?'" Or as it's often loosely translated, "Let your faith be bigger than your fear."

So I write this message to you letting you know how much I miss you, and how much I miss Sunday worship the way it usually is. I'm hopeful and prayerful that Covid-time will come to an end soon enough. But until then, please know how much I miss each and every single one of you! And remember that even though it's not the same, you can still worship with us online or in-person (with a mask)!

Be blessed and stay healthy,

Pastor Elizabeth



Sunday School

Starting on September 6th, we are planning to resume Sunday School!

Kids do have to wear masks and they will be socially distanced. Sunday School will take place for most kids in the fellowship hall, though some small classes will meet in the classrooms.

There will be no nursery care unfortunately at this time.

If you do not feel comfortable sending your kids for Sunday School, we understand. We will continue to email some materials to be done at home.

Changes to the Re-Opening Plan

Please read the new opening plan carefully. There are a couple changes:

1. We will begin officially live-streaming (instead of pre-recording) in September. This gives us more time to work on the technology with two cameras.
2. Musicians will video-record the music that week and it will play on the TVs. Everything else will be live, but this allows for the musicians to sing without masks (shields are proving ineffective). The musicians are putting together fantastic music for you!



STEPS FOR RE-OPENING

Zion United Church of Christ
Tonawanda, NY
updated 7/29/20

STEP 1: JULY 1

Step 1 begins in July



What is Step 1? Step 1 will be our first introduction to people re-gathering in the Sanctuary. Worship will still be pre-recorded, but only 50 people are allowed to gather in the Sanctuary on Sundays at 10am. Those who gather will watch the **PRE-RECORDED** service on the sanctuary TVS. Masks must be worn and families must be 6 ft apart.

STEP 2: AUGUST 1

Step 2 begins in August



During Step 2 will be the same as Step 1, except we will begin to record live music in the sanctuary during the week and include it in our pre-recorded services. 100 people are allowed in the Sanctuary at a time, with masks and social distancing. Groups can resume meetings. Rooms will be sanitized after every use.

STEP 3: SEPTEMBER 6

Step 3 begins on September 6



During Step 3 we will live-stream services on Sunday morning, however music will be pre-recorded. Up to 75% occupancy is permitted as long as Social Distancing can be maintained. Masks are required. There will be Sunday School but no nursery or coffee hour. We will stay in Step 3 until there is a vaccine. Step 3 will be modified as necessary.

STEP 4: TO BE DETERMINED

Step 4 will begin when there is a cure or vaccine



When there is finally a vaccine or a miraculous cure of the Coronavirus, we will return to "normal" church operations. When this day comes, we will have a worship service full of rejoicing! We will also continue to stream online after all of this is finished.

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OR WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/ZIONUCCTON

Church Member Updates!

If you didn't send one in for this edition, email or snail mail your updates to Pastor Elizabeth

I have been social distancing along with all my apartment mates at the Presbyterian Village. We put on our mask when we leave our apartment stay 6 ft. apart. We talk thru our masks and give virtual hugs. We have a well supplied library, I set up a large difficult puzzle up and work on it here and there. Thank God for being on line to text my kids and see new pictures of grandchildren and the 30 some great grands. They grow up so fast.

I love watching church every week on line, singing with the choir and the others singing. Taking a walk outside on our beautiful campus and watching the wildlife in my back yard. I thank God every day for his gifts and to heal our country. Miss seeing my church family in person but trust better days are coming. Be safe everyone and keep social distancing. Much love and blessings to all.

Orrah Wicks

What have I been doing? I retired from my job after 42 years on May 30th. I have been painting my outside windows, front and back wrought iron railings and making the outside of my house look nice! I'm packing and downsizing trying to get ready to sell my house! Oh, and I am wearing my mask and social distancing! Basically having more fun then I expected!

Jeannette Welch

I have been spending these warm sunny days floating on a noodle in my community pool. This gives me a chance to be with friends.

Barb Hewitt

Missing all!! Have journaled the first 30 days of the pandemic and learning to live a different stay at home lifestyle. Miss the social aspect of life the most! Been busy working from home, doing volunteer work, gardening, cooking, playing Yahtzee and Scrabble, baking and eating way tooo much!! Looking forward to seeing you as soon as it is safe - stay healthy:))

Joyce Dolce of the 3 Js!

When I looked at my calendar for April and saw that there was NOTHING on it I realized that was the first time my weeks hadn't been planned out for me. Usually I had classes at the Y, theater, weekly classes at area quilt stores and meals with friends to look forward to. I have since learned to embrace You Tube. Who knew there are so many quilt tutorials actually taught by the experts. The Y has daily classes which I was doing at the beginning and am going to make an effort to start doing again. Local theaters have been creative with weekly discussions or cabaret type shows and I discovered the National Theatre in London which shows a new play every other week. I actually phone friends now instead of texting to check in and I have finished many sewing projects that were left undone. I have come to realize I have actually enjoyed this quieter time and know that when things start up I will not be so anxious to sign up for everything that I might find interesting.

Robin Fowler

The Hengst family is doing well. We have adjusted to the changes and are forging forward by the grace of God.

Our highlights include:

Julianna moving up to 1st grade

Owen moving up to 4th grade and new school

Nathan finished middle school with high

honors. Now onto High School

We spent about a month renovating our back yard to include, removing Juniper trees, installing a new patio, removal of old sliding door and stairs to new patio and a new sliding door and building new stairs. Took about a month but gives our back yard more appeal and purpose.

We also spend a lot of our time in nature, at our camp in Hartsville (In the hills between Hornell and Alfred). The kids love it there!

Otherwise Owen has returned to Gymnastics and we all hope to return to church soon!

Be blessed and be a blessing to all.

Troy Hengst

New Church Babies!!!

Adrian Henry Hachten



Adrian Hachten was born on May 30th to Herb and Stacey Hachten. He was also baptized on July 29th at Zion UCC!

My thanks and prayers to all. I'm doing just fine. Hopefully I can see all in Church when we are allowed to get out.

Carrie is coming in August. I will go back to New Hampshire when Nellie goes for her back surgery.

My prayers with all. I'm doing well

Itha Poeltl

Lucy James Handley-Cousins

Lucy (Lulu) James Handley-Cousins was born on July 7 and is very happy to be the littlest Cousins sister. Ainsley, Emma, and Zoey are hugging and kissing her non-stop and love helping take care of her!

Sarah Handley-Cousins



As most of you know, I have spent the last 3 months in Virginia with my children at their insistence. Apparently I am not to be trusted to behave in the pandemic. I have been allowed to do hard labor like folding laundry or popping bubbles in bubble wrap. I have missed all my friends here but have to admit it is truly lovely being with my families and to know how they want to take care of me. Actually I was hospitalized for three days with a medical condition and was very glad I was not alone. All's well and I was brought home by Tom last Friday. Sue and James will arrive this week and after a stay here, will take me back - until it is "safe" for me to make it on my own here. (July 21)

Marilyn Stewart

The Kraskas have been busy since COVID hit. Mandy, a teacher, worked and is still working (here and there) from home while Jeff is back at work (after being off for a while). Abrielle just turned 4 and is thriving as a preschooler despite learning virtually. Addison is the sweetest and most polite 22 month old who adores her big sister. They both are enjoying the warm weather and pool. We continue to balance work and kids and everything else, but we are all healthy, safe, and happy. We hope everyone is doing well and we can't wait to come back to church soon! Here is a picture from Abrielle's The Little Mermaid themed 4th birthday party. This was the best we could do.

Mandy Kraska



I never thought that four months later we would still be practicing some form of self isolation. I have become best friends with my TV and numerous streaming services. Thank goodness for electronic devices and texting. Thank goodness for Pastor Elizabeth and her numerous efforts to keep our church family connected through Bible Study and weekly Worship Service.

I have told everyone that Robin and I have the best of both worlds right now. Living in a double in our respective apartments meant we could spend time together without fear of the virus but when we needed time alone we just went to our own apartments. I just keep taking baby steps every day to my new normal.

Jill Fowler

Diane Miltz and Shirley Stickler have been busy sorting and packing as they hope to have their house in Lakeview on the market in August. They will be looking for a smaller house in Tonawanda. Prayers would be appreciated. In the meantime, Diane and our neighbor's daughter cleaned & planted 3 flower gardens. (And walked our dog, Minnie, twice a day.)

Hi to all our church friends, Bob and I have been keeping pretty low key these last few months. Finally have finished some house projects, new roof, new flooring in living room and hallway and some new paint too! Have kept busy taking care of my mom and watching a few of our grandchildren on Tuesdays! We have really enjoyed time together as Bob has been furloughed since March. It looks like he will be going back to work (still part time) soon. We are so thankful for our Sunday morning church service, but it still isn't the same as worship together in person.

Missing you all, Bob and Pam Sedota

This quarantine hasn't been a hardship for me for the most part. I enjoy staying in my nest. Of course, Church and Choir have been my biggest miss. Also, hugging my mom and grands.

I was very lucky with my ordeal with the shingles. I had received the vaccine 5 years ago. My case was quite mild. Still, no picnic, but better than it could have been.

My Lucky (14 yr old Lab) is just these last weeks slowing down. Well, sort of! He can still run as I found out the other day as he took off across the street to my neighbors! I hadn't latched the gate and boy, I couldn't believe how fast he ran. Vet and I are on the same page as far as his care.

My son-in-law, Kelvin, has been issued his social security # thanks to help from Brian Higgins. Is now working.

Kelvin also got his greencard! A long and very slow process (not to mention expensive!) to come to the USA legally. Praise God for it all to have worked out. Waiting time now before he can become a citizen.

Missing you all.

God be with you till we meet again.

Sue House

Proverbs 22:17

"A merry heart does good like medicine"

Hello Church ,

Tom and I have been in the house mostly for 5 months now. We are using Instacart for our groceries and thankfully we have everything we need. I am in Physical Therapy now and hope to improve my strength so I can schedule my twice-cancelled knee surgery. I was last scheduled for April 25 and we all know what happened then. I have decided after many years of volunteering to retire from the Board of Brighton Library. Lets hope everything gets back to normal as it is a very important community resource and we need to support our local nonprofit that does so much good here locally.

Tom and I celebrated our 50th anniversary together with a roast beef dinner in our kitchen without the kids and grandkids which was happy/sad. We are glad that we have been able to celebrate this big occasion as many married couples are not so lucky.

We are visiting with family once a week in our backyard, socially distanced, and we have ice cream for the grandkids and get caught up on everyday happenings. We miss the sleepovers and outings.

We have to satisfy ourselves with virtual hugs.

Thank God, everyone in my family has been well, in spite of the fact that two of my children work in the healthcare field. We also have teachers who are concerned about everyone's wellbeing if

schools open in September. It has been a challenge teaching all the students online. My son in law teaches elementary kids in the inner city and many do not have computers. He is delivering hard copies for the kids without internet and devices and then collecting the work and talking by phone.

My daughter teaches English as a Second Language. That is a challenge online!

We hope everyone is well, stays safe and we will see you when we can all gather in church.

Carol and Tom McGrath

***If I missed any updates, please
send them for the next edition!***

The Alexander's have been through quite a few ups and downs the past several months as the pandemic has changed the world we live in.

With schools and malls closed we have not been to work for several months (except for a few hours to close a school).

Our deepest low on this journey came when our daughter, Sarah told us that she had been diagnosed with breast cancer. No parent is ever ready to hear that their child has cancer. For those of you that don't know, Sarah's six-year-old son Nathan has already survived brain cancer at age 4. It was heart -breaking to hear her tell us that she faced many appointments and tests alone as not even her husband, Nathan could attend some with her.

Each day our prayers were for five couples who are all battling cancer.

But we all know that God works in mysterious ways. As Sarah was beginning her chemotherapy she was also interviewing for a new job. We are proud to say that she will be starting as the middle school band teacher in the same building where I worked for 21 years and in the same district where Norm taught for 35 years.

Sarah just completed her 4th round of chemotherapy at Roswell Park and is doing amazing! Of course, she (and the family) try to stay as quarantined as possible. That means that grandma & grandpa don't get to see the grandsons as much as we like but whatever it takes to be safe is what is important.

There has been closet cleaning, room painting, furniture moving computer clean-out, gardening and all the things that many of you have done during this "at home" time. We are now focusing on our up-coming Ride for Roswell in August and looking forward to returning to worship in our sanctuary.

In Christian love, Norm & Lynn Alexander

March 15 was our last family time together. We celebrated Ren's birthday with a corned beef and cabbage dinner with our daughter and her family and Ren's brother and his wife. The next few days, everything shut down at our Senior residence as well as the state and country. No more card games with our friends and family. No more going out for lunch or family get-togethers. What would we do to occupy that time that we used to do social things?

For most of my life, I have taken pictures. In my teen years, it was family and friends that I took pictures of. Through the years, as my cameras got better (and one was worse), I continued to take pictures - family trips and vacations, special events, church activities, scenery, etc. Then came the grandchildren.....my basic 35mm camera just was not good enough for those great shots of grandchildren....I needed a camera with a zoom lens. For the past 25 years, (with the exception of the past four years), I have taken so many photos, but seldom organized them in any way. It was something that needed to be done, but there never was enough extended time periods to really get into that job, which I really do enjoy and look forward to. Along came Covid 19 and the lockdown. First I had a few smaller jobs - organizing some cabinets, sorting through some papers, etc.

Then two weeks into the lockdown, I started to work on my huge photo project. So every day I do something on my project - sometimes I get to spend a lot of time, some days, not so much time.

With everything being closed up, eating out was not an option. So naturally, that means cooking more. I have been studying my cookbooks so much more than ever before and trying new recipes. A lot of my time is now dealing with food. Our daughter, Donna, helps us with the grocery shopping. I e-mail her my list and within a week or so, she brings our goods over to us. Then there is the selection of the recipe, prepping the food, cooking, and the clean up. I spend a lot of time in the kitchen!

To help the residents of our building pass time, the administration announced a writing contest. So I got to thinking about things and places in my life that I might want to write about, as well as asking Ren about some specific things in his life that might be of interest to family members. So I have been writing short stories about our lives. I am so glad to be doing this because Ren is the last person in his family to remember where his family lived and what kind of things they did as a family. (His brother is 15 years younger and his memory of most things is very different.)

So while I haven't done as much writing as I want to, I am thinking of things that I do want to write about.

Nina Treitley

Hello! The Hudsons have been keeping busy boating, swimming & doing home renovations. My art teacher position has been eliminated in Alden so I am currently looking for employment. But life is good. Hopefully God has another plan for me!

Well Wishes to all!

The Hudsons



5 year old Kathleen Kenny moved to the second phase of treatment for her treatment—Consolidation. This phase consists of 28 weeks of Spinal Chemo and then 6 months of IV Combo Chemo. If all is well—no relapses—then she will move onto Maintenance which is the last phase of treatment. It's 2.5-3 years in total.

We would like to thank everyone for all of their prayers because we definitely felt them. The love and support that we have is amazing.

Ann Marie and Daniel Kenny



As I retired at 2019 year-end, have been home with Rosanne (she retired 4 years ago as a personal aide for Erie 1 BOCES to help in raising our 4 grandkids). Since March, with no gym I was thoroughly enjoying daily Mon-Fri with the older crowd (lol), we've spent our time on walks at various parks, gardening, improving our yard with yellow bag soil, a pallet of slate, painting, and spending much more time with the grandkids. She has resumed her oil painting skills and I have amped up my time on bike riding, which I do year-round (thank GOD for under armour !!), weather-permitting. Sometimes solo, and with many 20+ mile rides with Rosanne's soon-to-be 82 year-old Uncle !!, a 35+ year time with him, one of my dearest friends, who is in impeccable shape. Covid-19 was a bit tough with our son Matthew. He's a Hospitalist at Kenmore Mercy Hospital, and was involved in assisting with Covid-19 patients in the Catholic Health System for @ 2 months. Could only see him and his family via "drive-bys". He was scared that he'd bring it home and give it to us. Much better now. Can see him and his family now without masks.

We've kept to ourselves in only "seeing" our immediate family, like most everyone. Miss friends, and "drive-bys" have to suffice. Masks worn, and eventually did become second nature. Hard to believe.

And ... then our Kathleen's leukemia diagnosis in early June hit our family like a ton of bricks. Thank GOD she's been sent home after 35 days at Oshei, which we were told would be the most dangerous, and with a road still ahead for her involving weekly treatment at Roswell, which Rosanne & I hope we can assist Annmarie and Dan on, if allowed. Kathleen will have to be home-schooled, regardless of whether children will be going back or not. Her clinical trial out of Dana-Farber in Boston will follow her progress to the official 5 year "remission" point, and an additional 10 years beyond

To show what a small world we live in Buffalo, Kathleen's Pediatric PT provider ("Miss Amy" to Kathleen) is the daughter of long-time friends of Rosanne & I. She quickly made Kathleen her special project. An "angel" given to us to help Kathleen. Blessed. I actually baby-sat her and her sister when they were in grammar school, assisting with their homework, while also doing mine, so her parents could attend Buffalo Sabres games. Amy is now married, the proud mother of 2 sons in college, and was a personal aide to Jill & Jim Kelly's son Hunter when he was alive. In closing, I hope the future with an upcoming presidential election, Covid-19 handling, police reforms, protests, etc. goes much more smoothly than the venomous social media and news which surrounds us, dividing so many families and friends. Sad times, but I still believe there's much more good in this world than evil ...

Thanks for listening.
Dale Missert