

Dear Members of Mt. Zion,

“It’s beginning to look a lot like Christmas”, so as the popular tune of the season goes. And it does based on outward appearances. Neighborhoods have lit up as the residents have dutifully placed strings of light bulbs around their houses and shrubbery. Adorned Christmas trees are easily observed in bay windows as we drive down the road. Most radio stations play endless holiday ditties that often send messages to “Be Happy”.

On a visual basis, everything does seem to have radically changed. Yet Christmas is a time of great sadness and depression for the elderly who are isolated and lonely and for those who have experienced the loss of loved ones. The call to “Be Happy” is deeply incongruent to the realities occurring to those of troubled hearts.

Let us in our days of celebration be mindful of those who find this time painful. I am moved by the caring ministries that happen here at Mt. Zion; the trinity choir and youth who go to sing carols to our homebound members, the Monday Morning Bible Class that sends out cards to the sick and shut-ins, and the Open Doors Food Pantry that provides food for the needy so that families can have a delicious Christmas meal.

I am certain that my list above can go on and on. Yet, I would like to add one more. Since you are receiving this E-Pointer on Thursday, I want to remind you that “The Longest Night” Service will be held tomorrow night, December 21st, at Mt. Zion. This small service of candles, remembrances, prayers, and quiet reflection will be held in the Chapel at 7 p.m.

I pray that God’s peace abide with you this Christmas.

Grace & Peace,

Gary

Sunday Worship

December 23, 2018

Scripture Lessons: Micah 5:2-5a/ Hebrews 10:5-10/ Luke 1:39-45

Message: “Hope in Unexpected Places”

December 24, 2018

Christmas Eve Services;

Children’s and Family Christmas Eve Service - 4:00 p.m.

Contemporary Candlelight Service - 7:00 p.m.

Traditional Candlelight Service - 9:00 p.m.

December 30, 2018

First Sunday After Christmas Day – One Service at 10 a.m.

Pastor Gary will be on vacation from December 25, 2018 to January 1, 2019. Pastor Ken Dunnington will provide pastoral coverage during this time. If you need to reach him, you can call his cell

Here are some **events and opportunities** for you to get connected in the church:

Shepherding Team #4 Is On Call This Week, December 23rd through December 29th. Contact Margaret & Jerry Rose.

There will be NO KID’s Zone on the 23rd, 30th or January 6th!

Please find your 2019 Giving Envelopes in the West Narthex. Need envelopes? Don't need envelopes? Have unused envelopes to give back? See Will Scott .

HEARING AID? If you have a hearing aid with the "telecoil" feature you can pick up a telecoil at the West side of the A/V booth. We only have one at this time, but if there is enough interest we can expand. If you're not sure, talk to a sound tech and we'll do our best to help.

BRRR COLD NIGHTS ... WARM PAJAMAS NEEDED FOR BETTER BEDTIMES!!! In January, our Mt Zion Family will have the opportunity to reach out to children served by the Pajama Program (www.pajamaprogram.org) Many of these children are in group foster homes, shelters and dealing with unfortunate situations in their young lives. We can help provide a happier bedtime with our donation of New pajamas and story books for a cozier ending to their day. New Pajamas and Books will be collected January 6 through January 20, 2019. All sizes are needed from Infants through Teens. These will be distributed to children in need in our local Maryland/Delaware/DC area. On behalf of the kids your donation will be helping thank you, thank you, thank you! Contact: Karen Williams, PJ Program Coordinator

Safeguarding Houses of Worship - In our continuing efforts to ensure that Mt. Zion is a safe, secure environment for our church community, last month we conducted a safety walk-thru of the church complex with the Howard County Police Department. As a result, there are a number of recommendations that the Trustees are reviewing for implementation. One of those security recommendation, is that during the Sunday worship hours, the rear (side) door to the church should remain locked. Therefore, **beginning Sunday, December 2nd, the rear/side door to the church will remain locked during Sunday worship hours.** We will soon be posting a sign on those doors alerting people that they will be locked. If you have any concerns, please contact the church office and one of the Trustees will contact you. Note: This does not impact the entrance to the kitchen which shares the same parking area.

The Monday Morning Bible Study Class invites you to participate in this "season of giving" by donating to the International Heifer Project , a non-profit organization that works with others to alleviate hunger, poverty and environmental degradation. HPI helps impoverished families become self reliant by providing food and income producing animals and training Last year your kind and generous donations added up to \$940.00 and we were able to purchase **Two Water Buffalo, Three Goats and Four flocks of Chicks!** Thank you in advance for your gifts of the heart. Cash or checks to Mt. Zion UMC marked Heifer donation will be gratefully accepted!

Cherub Choir: The Cherub Choir is starting for any preschool aged child. We will be learning Sunday School songs. We will meet on the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Sundays in the month from 9:45 am to 10:00 am in the Chapel. Contact Amy Ciliberti. **We will meet on the 9th and 23rd.**

Save the Date! Marriage Enrichment Retreat: February 15-17, 2019 in Ocean City, MD. Make plans now to enjoy this winter weekend getaway with your spouse! This year's theme is "Love to Last a Lifetime: Letting God Lead the Way." **Location:** Dunes Manor Hotel Ocean City, MD. **Cost:** \$350/couple (includes accommodations Friday and Saturday nights, 2 meals on Saturday and brunch on Sunday). Registration Brochures will be available in November. For more information contact Barb Jacques at barbjacques3@gmail.com. The marriage retreat is a sponsored by Mt. Zion United Methodist Church, Triadelphia Seventh Day Adventist Church, and Maranatha Seventh Day Adventist Church.

The Care Giver's Group meets the 3rd Sunday of every month between services, in the church library. Contact Judy H. Johnson.

A Shoe box to collect Box Tops for Education is being placed in the church entry way. The local elementary school collects them to earn money to purchase items for their school. They will be collected and donated. Thank You, Marcy McAdoo.