

The Glory of Zion

Christ's Light Shining Among Us

Newsletter of **Zion Lutheran Church, School & Preschool**

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April 2025



Sunrise in the Black Hills / Sonrise on New Life

Mornings in the Black Hills of South Dakota hold a quiet majesty that takes one's breath away. As darkness lingers over the rolling hills and towering pines, an expectant hush fills the air. The first light of dawn spills over the rugged peaks, painting the sky in hues of gold, crimson, and violet. Slowly, the darkness recedes, giving way to the warmth and promise of a new day. Those who have witnessed such a sunrise know that it is more than just another morning—it is a moment of awe, a glimpse of glory breaking through the veil of night.

So it was on that first Easter morning. The world is shrouded in darkness—the darkness of sin, the weight of death, and the seeming finality of the tomb. The disciples, still grieved by the suffering and crucifixion of their Lord, cannot yet perceive the dawn that is coming. But then, the first rays of resurrection light burst forth! The stone is rolled away! The grave is empty! Christ has conquered death! And in that moment, the world is changed forever.

The open tomb of Easter is the most glorious sight in all of history, surpassing even the most breathtaking sunrise. Just as the rising sun transforms the Black Hills from shadow to splendor, the resurrection of Jesus transforms our lives from despair to hope, from fear to faith, and from death to eternal life. What seemed final—the tomb, sealed and guarded—is, in reality, only the threshold to the dawn of salvation. Christ's triumph over the grave is the divine Sonrise that never fades, illuminating our path with His truth, His grace, and His victory.

This Easter reality is not merely a historical event; it is our present and eternal hope. When we look upon a sunrise in the Black Hills, we see a reflection of God's faithfulness. Just as the sun rises every morning without fail, so too does the light of Christ shine upon His people, sustaining and strengthening them. Even when clouds obscure the dawn, we know that the sun is still there, just as our faith assures us that Christ remains with us, even in times of suffering and doubt.

The Apostle Paul declares, "For if we have been united with Him in a death like His, we shall certainly be united with Him in a resurrection like His" (Romans 6:5). Baptized into Christ's death and resurrection, we live in His light. The resurrection is not only Christ's victory but also our victory, for He shares His triumph with us. This means that, though we walk through valleys of shadow and trial, we do so with the confidence that our Redeemer lives. Our sins are forgiven. Death has lost its sting. We belong to Christ, and nothing—no darkness, no sorrow, no grave—can separate us from Him.

This Easter, whether you stand in the shadow of the Black Hills or kneel in the quiet of your home, let your heart be lifted by the dawn of resurrection joy. The glory of the open tomb shines brighter than the most dazzling sunrise, and it shines for you. Rejoice, for the night is over, and the Son of Righteousness has risen with healing in His wings (Malachi 4:2). Amen.

In the Bright Light of His Open Tomb,
Pastor Schulte



DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS: Cornerstone

By Phyllis Martens

Did you know one of Zion’s community ministries is the Cornerstone Mission? Ruth and Bill Kudera have organized the efforts for Zion’s involvement at Cornerstone for more than three years, but according to Ruth, Zion’s involvement with Cornerstone started in the 1980’s. Over the years, numerous congregation members have been involved with providing a meal for people at the mission, which serves Rapid City’s homeless population.

The Cornerstone Mission houses and feeds residents who are homeless, transitioning with jobs, and looking for a home, as well as homeless Veterans. The Mission serves three meals a day to its residents, with the evening meal being open to homeless, non-resident individuals. The evening meal is where Zion comes into play.

Zion’s dedicated team of volunteers helps prepare and serve Cornerstone’s evening meal on the second Wednesday and fifth Monday of each month. This involves meal planning, shopping, preparing and serving. The food served is fairly broad, Ruth said, unless the team receives a notice for special dietary needs, such as dairy-free. Zion picks up the tab for the food while Zion members supply the labor for creating and serving the meals. The budgeted goal is \$100 per meal to serve 125 to 150 people. Many Zion members have donated to this effort in a variety of ways, said Ruth.



Pat Valenti, Ruth Kudera, & Jan Meadows prepping the meal.

You might wonder what it takes to serve a meal. After the menu is determined, the shopping begins. Feeding South Dakota is instrumental in suppling food at reduced prices. Much of the food is purchased the day before or the morning of the day the meal is served. The actual meal prep starts at 3pm at the Mission. The typical day requires six to eight people to help with the prep and the serving of the meal.

According to Ruth, the biggest challenge of this ministry effort is the selection of available foods from Feeding South Dakota. This selection has decreased from six-plus pages to as little as one page of available items. Still, Zion serves a nice variety of nutritious, hot meals that are appreciated by all.

Ruth shared that the mission has never run out of food on nights when Zion cooks and serves. Once all participants have been served, any extra food can be served as seconds or thirds. Serving starts at 6pm and stops at 6:30pm. Remaining leftovers stay at the mission. Clean-up is completed by the mission.



John Burke & Bill Kudera cutting meat in preparation for an evening meal at Cornerstone.

Congratulations, Zion Destination Imagination Teams!

This year Zion has three teams that are competing in D.I. tournaments. We had our first tournament of the year March 15. All three teams took first place in their challenges! Now, the teams will prepare for State competition in Pierre on April 5! The top two teams in each challenge will advance to Global Competition in Kansas City. Watch for an update in the bulletin and next newsletter.

MINISTRY FOCUS: Board of Youth

By Peggy Hettick

During the winter months, an average of 30-35 youth attend events and activities organized by Zion’s Board of Youth. Come to Zion on a Wednesday night, and you might be blown away by the energy and conversations taking place around the building.

Zion member Tiffany Warnke is a dynamic force on the Youth Board. She joined the board a couple of years ago.

“I wanted to serve,” she said. “I wanted to be involved somehow with the church.”

She thought about where she could serve that would also involve her children, Samantha, Nathaniel and Josh. The Youth Board made sense.

“So, here I am,” she said. “This is a good fit for me.”

Tiffany assists Zion’s Director of Christian Education (DCE), Lorien Petersen, with coordinating and planning projects, programs, activities and events for Zion’s youth. Along with supervising activities and events, Tiffany provides leadership and mentors to help guide Zion’s youth in their faith journey.

Working with youth can be challenging, of course, but it is also incredibly rewarding, Tiffany said.

Tiffany encourages the youth of Zion to join in on the fun and fellowship! Bring a friend to Youth Group or Sunday School! Meet new friends! Build relationships!

Parents, encourage your children to come to the youth group. Give your children the gift of helping them to build their life on a firm foundation with Jesus. I know that I am glad that my parents gave this gift to me.

Be sure to check out the church calendar and the Youth bulletin board at the beginning of the hallway near the narthex for information about upcoming Youth events.

Grades 6-12 meet almost every Wednesday all year long. JAM (Jesus And Me) events for grades 4-5 happen several times a year.



Youth Group Leaders and Members

Stewardship Minute

By Kevin Aker

While none of you sit on the edge of your seats just waiting to hear an update on the financial health of Zion each month, it is important. The reality is our ministry needs your tithes and offerings to run.

You can give in the way that you prefer. However, we just wanted to point out the option to give digitally. A recent survey by Barna Group found that nearly half of Americans (44%) prefer giving digitally. So, that’s why we want to show you how easy it is to give digitally!

Simply go to our website, **zionrc.org**, and click “GIVE”. You then have several options! You can give to the general fund, or to specific campaigns or causes. You can do this as a one-time gift, or you can set up automatically recurring payments with your card or checking account.

Most of us pay for tv streaming services, our electricity, and gas bills through automated payments—why not set your tithe same way? Using the recurring payments option is especially beneficial to our ministry, as it provides consistent, regular giving. Taking a few minutes to set up automatic giving is an easy way to make your monthly tithe a priority and ensures your first fruits go directly to work, supporting His ministry here on earth.

If you have questions about digital giving, Camron Ottenbacher or Kevin Aker would be happy to answer them!



Zion Website



Vanco App

SCHOOL FOCUS: Afternoon Pre-K—Mrs. Leyden

Afternoon Preschool Classroom

By Danielle Leyden

Affectionately known as Pre-K, we focus on a Bible lesson, a letter of the week, and using numbers. This is a starting point to introduce other subjects and topics about the world. We pair our natural curiosity with discovery in the classroom, sensory, and investigative opportunities. Experimenting with eggs and dropping them from different heights let us practice guessing what will happen. We made ice cream in the classroom, built houses, mixed Jello, and learned about germs. A hands-on experience and a visually dramatic experiment certainly gets our attention. Our class sewed a quilt for our library display. We have also had fun dress-up days and a field trip to the Journey Museum. Pre-K is a fun place to learn and grow!

Meet Danielle Leyden

By Ann Solinsky

If you are at Zion at about 11:30am during the week, you will see Mrs. Danielle (Dani) Leyden arrive to teach her afternoon preschool class. This year marks Dani’s third year teaching at Zion, but Zion is not the first place she has taught preschool. She taught preschool at Little Lambs’ Lutheran Preschool in Sturgis and then spent about eight years in the hotel and hospitality industry until COVID changed everything. At the same time, Dani decided she needed a change so she could spend more time with her family. She says, “Teaching preschool was not my plan; it was God’s plan.” She saw in her church bulletin at Peace Lutheran Church that Zion was looking to hire an afternoon preschool teacher. She didn’t give it much thought until her husband and fellow congregation members encouraged her to apply for the job. She came in for the interview and a while later was offered the job and has been at Zion ever since!



Danielle grew up in the Sturgis area and is a farm/ranch girl at heart and would like to return to country life someday so she can have animals and a big garden. She met her husband, Kelly, working at a summer camp near Vermillion, South Dakota. They will celebrate their 11th anniversary this June. They have two children, Russell and Camilla, that attend Zion Lutheran School, and they also have a foster child, Atreus. Kelly and Dani have been foster parents for five years as they both saw the need and the value in becoming foster parents. They have been able to care for six children through these five years and hope to continue to be a family for children that need a loving and safe home.

When Dani is not teaching preschool or hanging out with her family, she enjoys doing anything outside. Some of her favorite things to do are gardening, hiking, climbing, and camping. Last summer the Leyden family went camping and slept in a tepee! They have a lot of fun memories from that trip even though it rained, and they got a bit wet sleeping in the tepee. Dani also likes to travel. One of her favorite trips was going to Belize and she would like to travel around Europe someday.

I asked Dani to tell me what skill she would like to learn some day. First, she said patience. She said this is a work in progress and God keeps giving her opportunities to work on learning this skill. She also said she would like to learn to be a midwife. She is fascinated by the miracle of birth, and it would be very powerful experience to go through the birth process with laboring women.

Finally, I asked Dani what she would like her preschool students to learn in her class. She said, “I want them to learn that manners are important and how to treat others. I also want them to learn to learn.” She loves that she gets to work with the youngest of students and help them to learn to love school, God, and the world around them.

Student Insights: Mrs. Leyden’s Pre–K Class

Why do we celebrate Easter? What is your favorite part of Easter?

Robert: We were hiding eggs because maybe Jesus was hiding. Finding eggs are my favorite; some of them have chocolate inside!

Carter: Easter is about God died on the cross, and when we are sleeping the Easter Bunny comes. I like finding eggs. We are going to my grandpa’s house far away for all day on Easter.

Corbin: We celebrate Easter because it is when God rises from the dead. My favorite part is collecting eggs.

Stratton: We celebrate Easter for Jesus’ love. I like the eggs with candy inside the best.

Madison: Easter is about fun and bunnies. The Easter Bunny brings you eggs.

Ryder: Easter was when He rose from the dead. The Easter egg hunt we have at home is my favorite part.

Elsie: Easter is about Jesus rising from the dead. I like finding eggs and eating candy. Last year, I enjoyed eating French toast with my family.



Evelyn: Easter is about Jesus. My favorite part is the Easter Bunny and eggs.

Nash: Easter is about God. I like to find Easter eggs and get candy!

Radek: We celebrate Easter because Jesus rose from the dead. I like when we get to find eggs and when the Easter Bunny comes.

Grace: Easter is about getting eggs with toys inside, and the Easter Bunny comes.

Zoi: We celebrate Easter because God died on the cross and rose again. My favorite part is having all the eggs and one golden egg with stuff inside, like toys and candy.

Huntley: We celebrate Easter because of God. My favorite part is the eggs and the things inside. I also like putting carrots out for the bunnies.

Dylan: I like chocolate and eggs!

Elizabeth: We celebrate Jesus’ birthday and my favorite part is finding a BIG chocolate bunny!



April School Events

Special Events for Our Parents and Students

- ⇒ **April 3-4:** State Science Assessment for 5th grade.
- ⇒ **April 4:** Registration for 25/26 school year is due.
- ⇒ **April 4:** Spring Band/Piano Recital with Ms. Meloy at 8:30am at Zion.
- ⇒ **April 5:** State DI competition in Pierre. Good luck to all three teams!
- ⇒ **April 10:** New Horizons Band at 8:30am at Zion. We invite volunteers, families, Zion buddies, and congregation members to join us. Donuts and coffee will be served afterwards.
- ⇒ **April 10:** Spring Musical for grades 1-5 at 6:00pm at Zion.
- ⇒ **April 14-16:** Spring Book Fair—join your student for lunch and shop the book fair.
- ⇒ **April 16:** Kindergarten leads chapel at 1:00pm. Come watch the classes reenact the Easter story!
- ⇒ **April 17-21:** Easter break—no school or daycare.
- ⇒ **April 22—May 1:** State testing for grades 3-5.

Tuition Options for 2025–2026

Community Rate—available to all upon request.

\$5925 first child \$5335 each additional child

Active Zion Church Member Rate

\$3060 first child \$2735 each additional child

This active member rate is given to the school by Zion Lutheran Church in honor and support of the family’s commitment to Christian Education. Contact the front office for more information about Active Member rate.

Book Fee for All Students

\$185 first child \$160 each additional child

* Contact Ann Solinsky for more information.

Preschool 2025–2026

Registration: \$75 one time

3 year old—2 days: \$183 per month

4 year old—3 days: \$214 per month

4/5 year old—5 days: \$336 per month

Full-Time preschool/daycare: \$694 per month

Daycare: \$6 per hour

* Contact Hope Genzlinger for more information about PK.

NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: The Swanson Family

By Jan Meadows

It is my pleasure to introduce to you the Swanson family: John, Ishy, Joseph, Lila, and Esther. The family moved to Rapid City in November, 2023 and began attending Zion soon thereafter. They transferred their membership from Virginia and became members here in August 2024. They have three children: Joey, who is a kindergartener at Zion, Lila, who is will be four in June, and little Esther, who was just born last October.

John and Ishy both moved around a number of times as children and adults. They have lived in Florida, Wisconsin, California, Pennsylvania, Georgia, India, England, and more!

John and Ishy both have engineering degrees; John’s as a mechanical engineer and Ishy’s in biomedical engineering. Ishy’s present priority is caring for their children and their home. Biomedical engineering is on hold for the next few years. Because John is able to work remotely through his employment, the family had the opportunity to pick the place where they wish to raise their children. Rapid City and Zion provide that place, with a lifestyle they enjoy as a family, and solid Lutheran education for their children.

I asked Joey a couple of questions: 1) If you could have one super power, what would it be? Joey gave this some careful thought before answering, and finally said, “Invincibility!” When I asked why that super power, he felt it was quite obvious that then he would be invincible, of course. Yes, I can’t argue with that. I’m impressed that he knew that word. 2) What would you like to tell the folks here at Zion? Joey answered, “I love you.”

Lila is still at home with her baby sister, Esther, and Mom and Dad each day, so I asked her what is her favorite part of the day. Lila likes to play Lava Monster. I don’t know what that is, but I’m anxious to go try it out with her.

Finally, I asked John and Ishy what they would like to share with all you folks here at Zion, and they said, “We are excited to be part of this community of faith at Zion. We wanted our children to receive a Lutheran education, and Zion Church, School, and Preschool provides just what we want for our family.” Join me in welcoming them, and I think you’ll soon respond to Joey and his family, “I love you too!”



CONGREGATION MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: The Herz Family

By Kate Meadows

Bob and Marilyn Herz have a long and well-rounded history with Zion—on both the school and church sides. They recall attending their first wedding in Rapid City at Zion when it was on the corner of 5th and Quincy streets downtown. A couple named Dave and Roxi were getting married.

Little did they know that decades later, Bob Herz and Dave Withee would serve together on church boards, sing together in the church choir and support a major church/school expansion project—the Capital Campaign. Marilyn Herz and Roxi Withee would teach Sunday school for many years. Bob would be Roxi’s boss at Zion Lutheran School; Roxi taught Kindergarten at Zion while Bob was principal (and for many years after). (Side note: At the height of Bob’s tenure as Zion’s school principal, 130 students were enrolled.)

But the Herzes’ path to Rapid City wasn’t exactly straight. In fact, they moved to Rapid City multiple times, their in-demand careers as teachers taking them from one state to another as they raised a family of three children.

Their first move to Rapid City happened in 1980, when Bob was called to Zion as the school principal and full-time teacher for 5th and 6th grades. That year, they skipped two college graduations on May 9—their own—to fly to Rapid City from Alma, MO, and visit Zion for the first time. Bob would receive a master’s degree and Marilyn a bachelors degree, both in the field of education, upon returning to Alma.

Having grown up on a dairy farm in eastern Montana, Marilyn had long wanted to be a church worker. But God had other ideas about how and where she would shine Christ’s light. During their first tenure in Rapid City, Marilyn

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substitute taught while their three children—Jason, Jenny and John—were young. All in all, Marilyn taught in public school districts from 1983 to 2007, 17 years at the elementary school level and six years at the middle school. She also served as the Rapid City School District’s secondary literacy coordinator.

In 2001, Marilyn was named South Dakota Teacher of the Year. She met President George Bush and attended a week of space camp in Alabama. When she returned, she challenged her students to learn the aspects of a shuttle mission.

Prior to coming to Rapid City, Bob had been a Lutheran school teacher for a long time, teaching in classrooms in Perry County, MO; Shawano, Wisc.; and Alma, MO. During their short stint in Wisconsin, Bob taught the sister of former Zion pastor Ray Hartwig.

Both Bob and Marilyn were raised in the church. Bob grew up in Beecher, Ill.

“My dad was very involved with the church, and he made sure we all got to go to the Lutheran school that we had, K-8,” he said.

But Bob had a special place in his heart for public school, as well. He taught in the Rapid City public schools for many years, walking the halls in Black Hawk, Dakota Middle School, Valley View Elementary School. He finished his career as a full-time assistant principal at North Middle School, where he worked 1996-2004.

Even when the church and school were still at the 5th and Quincy location, the Herzes (along with other Zion members) knew that size was an issue for the church/school. One of the classrooms was in the basement, and school sports teams would have to borrow other elementary school gyms around town to practice and host games. (For a time, Bob coached 5th and 6th grade basketball with the late Rick Kirschenmann, a longtime Zion member.)

That’s partly why the move from 5th and Quincy to the top of the hill where Zion currently sits was such a God-driven thing, she said.

“The way you saw God working through the impossibilities of that move,” she said, “all the things that had to fall into place to make the move happen.”

Bob and Marilyn recall that the first church service at Zion’s current location was held outside, on the grass.

“Was there grass?” Marilyn pondered aloud.

“Well, there were weeds,” Bob replied.

Now, with seven grandkids ranging from age two to 18 and their three kids living in three states, the Herzes stay busy traveling between family members and supporting their children and their children’s families. Daughter, Jen, is a co-owner of Clothes Mentor just north of I-90. Most days Bob and Marilyn are there, tracking and managing inventory. They have hosted small group Bible studies since the early 1990s and love to make connections between Zion members and people they know.

Strike up a conversation with one of them, and you’re bound to find a special connection!



Blood Drive

Let’s come together and save lives! Did you know that only 3% of the population donates blood, yet most people are eligible. Make a difference in someone’s life for a short hour of yours!

When: April 29, 2025

Time: 2:30-6:00pm

Where: Zion Lutheran Church Narthex

Give Roxi Withee a text or call at 605-786-4237 to secure a spot! You can also go directly to Vitalant or sign up online.

This is an opportunity to show our thankfulness for God’s many blessings!



Random Question with...

Lorien Petersen; DCE

What do you like to do in your free time?

In my spare time I enjoy being active in the local performing arts community. As a lifelong lover of the arts, I have always enjoyed performing in and supporting theater, music and dance wherever I have lived. Whether acting on stage at Black Hills Community Theater or Seraphim Theater, singing with the Dynamix Women’s Acapella Chorus, or working behind the scenes on theatrical productions I love it all! Due to my odd work schedule I spent about 20 years away from being active in theater, but a couple years ago I really felt the pull to make time to get back into something I really love and I’m so glad I did! Some of my favorite local projects include being part of the “Nunsemble” in Sister Act, assistant directing Fiddler on the Roof, and singing for Godspell. I am currently doing prop design for Cabaret at BHCT. During the past few summers I’ve volunteered with Flutter Productions, part of the Black Hills Works family, to help actors of all abilities put on amazing productions including Alice in Wonderland, Peter & the Wolf, and Rumpelstiltskin. We have quite a vibrant performing arts community here in the Rapid City area and it has been so much fun to be part of it!



April Youth Events

- April 6: Coffee Hour— Bring treats before 9am.
- April 9: Youth Board Mtg—7:00pm at Zion.
- April 11: Rush Hockey Concession Fundraiser 5-11pm at the Monument. Sign up on Youth Bulletin Board.
- April 16: No Youth Group/Bible Study
- April 19: Easter Breakfast Set-up at 11am at Zion. Sign up on Youth Bulletin Board.
- April 20: Easter Breakfast 6:30-10:30am at Zion. Sign up on Youth Bulletin Board

ZION YOUTH MINISTRY INVITES YOU TO OUR

Annual Zion Family
Easter Breakfast

April 20th in the Zion
7-10 AM Narthex

Egg Bakes - Biscuits & Gravy - Fruit Salad - Pastries

A FREEWILL DONATION WILL COLLECTED TO SUPPORT ZION YOUTH MINISTRY

			
<p>Palm Sunday Worship Saturday April 12 at 5:30pm Sunday April 13 at 8am & 10:45am</p>	<p>Maundy Thursday Worship April 17 at 10am & 6pm</p>	<p>Good Friday Worship April 18 at 10am & 6pm</p>	<p>Easter Sunday Worship Sunday, April 20 6am Sunrise 8am 10:45am</p>