



# Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

Greetings, my siblings in Christ:

As we start a new calendar year, let's take just a moment or two and reflect on how much God has been blessing this congregation and our ministries:

1. **Evergreen Academy** continues to provide the highest quality of loving care for the most precious members of our community – our children. This Christian-based day-care and preschool ministry provides over 95 families in this community with the essential service of childcare, and we have received supplemental grant funding to ensure a smooth operation. God has been very good to Evergreen Academy. Thank You, Jesus.
2. Our **sanctuary roof** is finally getting replaced and the interior work will soon start. For those of you who worship remotely, you may not have seen that our precious pipe organ was removed (for safekeeping during this restoration project), but please know that when that beautiful instrument is reassembled, we will be celebrating with a re-dedication concert!
3. **Nina's Place: A Free Community Market and Pantry** is now operational on Saturdays and is an incredible blessing for people in our community. If you have not had the chance to volunteer or even just stop-by on a Saturday, please do. You will be moved by the experience to see people grateful for some help, picking out things that they need to feed their families. The numbers of friends and families we have served in just two weeks is astounding (138 families week one, 107 families week two). This is an incredible endeavor among three nonprofits (Zion, FLIPANY and Deerfield Beach Community Cares) and we have received initial financial support from the Children's Services Council and the City of Deerfield Beach, along with our Evergreen Academy and Zion donations for our annual **Reverse Advent Calendar**. We need continued support to meet this need in our community, so please donate and volunteer as you are able. We have closets for baby items, personal hygiene products, and school supplies. We also have specific items for the unhoused, so please know that whatever you can give will benefit people directly.

4. We continue to worship and grow and learn in the ways that strengthen our faith and relationship with Jesus. You often hear Cantor Kurt Schmidt say, "**Just show up.**" That is a simple but important message for you to plug-in to faith-building opportunities (such as praying for the first 10 days of the calendar year). "Plugging-in" to the many different opportunities is not so much a convenience but rather the mandate that Jesus gives us to "Go make disciples" (Matthew 28:19-20). Jesus' order is to "[teach] them to obey everything that I have commanded of you" (Matt. 28:19-20). We are Gospel-oriented people, so this message should resonate with us and inspire us.
  - a. As part of our focus on being "more like Jesus," we are guiding prayer and connections with similar vocations (medical services, education, professional, retired, etc...). PLUG-IN to what suits you best and find connections that you otherwise may never find.
  - b. Consider serving in a more active role for Sunday services. We have sign-ups for Readers, Greeters and Coffee Fellowship, but you can always offer your time to serve as assisting minister (it's not as intimidating as you might think!). Perhaps you could help with setting-up or cleaning-up the worship space before or after our services. Much like when everyone helps to change the banners (paraments), "many hands make light work."
  - c. If you have any willingness to help the Congregation Council with your expertise, or even just doing some mundane administrative tasks, (labeling files, sorting files and boxes, boxing old records for archives, etc...), please let Robin or Gail know. Even maintaining church records is a service to this congregation and your contribution would be welcome.
5. Over this last year we have said our earthly goodbyes and find peace in the heavenly welcome for some beautiful souls, some of whom have been interred in our beautiful Memorial Garden: Doris Jackson, Pamela Jo Robert, Laura Johnson, and Pastor Fred Auman.

Attached to this letter is your 2022 giving statement, which is generated by our "offerings" software (both online giving and in-person or in-kind giving). Please review your statement and if there are any discrepancies, please contact Robin Larson at the email address: [treasurer@zion-lutheran.org](mailto:treasurer@zion-lutheran.org). We can record in-kind giving throughout the year, but you must contact Robin Larson to record them.

I want to take this opportunity to thank a few people specifically (and sincerely):

**Cantor Kurt Schmidt** – You have been the rock on which this foundation stands for the last couple years. You have gone above and beyond and your commitment to building the kingdom of God is incredibly inspiring. Thank you.

**Erica Blankenship** – You have been a steadfast leader at Evergreen Academy, and I sleep well at night knowing that you are in charge and have surrounded yourself with such capable leaders. Your dedication and commitment are examples of what God calls us to do. Thank you.

**Gail Schmidt** – We have gotten a lot of things accomplished in the last couple years, and I am grateful for your perseverance, your leadership, and your no-nonsense way of handling all these vendors/contractors/solicitors. I doubt that these massive projects would have been done without your time and effort. Thank you.

**Michele Clancy and Debbie Burns** – You both stepped-up to join the Congregation Council and help make decisions about the direction of this congregation. I realize that the “once a month” meeting commitment has morphed into a lot more with Zooms...your willingness to participate is immensely appreciated, especially when you accept the responsibility for recording meeting minutes and jumping on a quick call in the middle of the week. Thank you.

**Scotty Mac (Scott McElroy)** – You are always willing to lend a hand and a tool to get things done. That sort of dedication is appreciated more than you know. Thank you.

We have been blessed with the spiritual guidance, inspiration and presence of several worship Leaders, and I want to thank them as well: Pastor Cathy Lauterhahn, Pastor Jonathan Gantt, Pastor David Dangerfield, Pastor Nancy Zuckerman, Pastor Bill Knott, and Cantor Kurt Schmidt. Each of them has given this congregation the inspiration to go out and build the kingdom of God and I am so grateful that they were here to deliver that message.

Please stay connected with us as we embark on even more mission-driving adventures this calendar year! We are continuing our ministries, but will also be working on the overall direction of this congregation's assets and spiritual leadership. There is a great deal to be done...I hope you are inspired to be a part of building the kingdom of God here at Zion – Ministries Under the Cross.

In Christ,

Dr. Robin Larson