

Greater Zion Day: Honoring 143 Years of Faith and Fellowship

Every July, this being the 143rd time, the people of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church celebrate our Founders' Day. Since 1937, that celebration has been known as Greater Zion Day. We remember that evening, Tuesday, July 18, 1882, at 7 pm in the Parlor of St. Mark's Episcopal Church in downtown Salt Lake City, where five individuals gathered and believed that with the help of God, they should establish a Lutheran Church in Utah. That very evening the papers were drawn up, prayers were said and, with a good bit of excitement, they established Zion. It was the first Lutheran Church in Utah, and history tells us that Zion is the 5th oldest Lutheran congregation west of the Rockies.

The name for the founders' day, Greater Zion Day, dates to the early 20th century when Zion had branch congregations in mostly rural areas. One day a year in July, all the members of Zion—those who worshiped downtown and those who worshiped in their rural locations (Sandy, Park City, Bingham, and Eureka)—gathered for a picnic to celebrate the founding. The “greater” Zion community got together for Greater Zion Day.

Over the years, Zion has worshiped in many places: a sod house, a traditional steepled church downtown, and now our beautiful home on Foothill Drive. The bell we ring each Sunday is the original from 1890, but Greater Zion Day isn't about buildings. It's about the people—past and present—who have made Zion a place of worship, fellowship, and faith for more than a century.

On this special day, we honor the legacy of those who came before us and give thanks for the community we continue to build today.