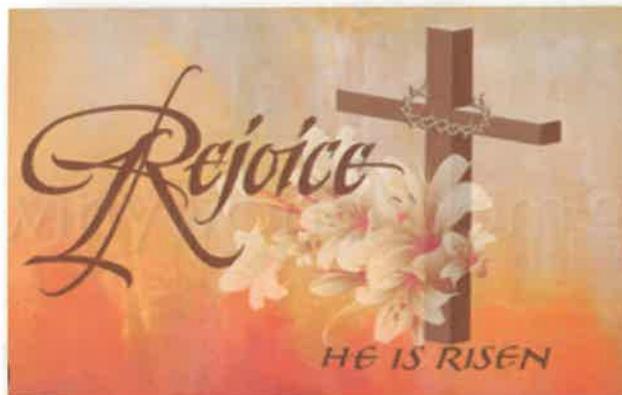
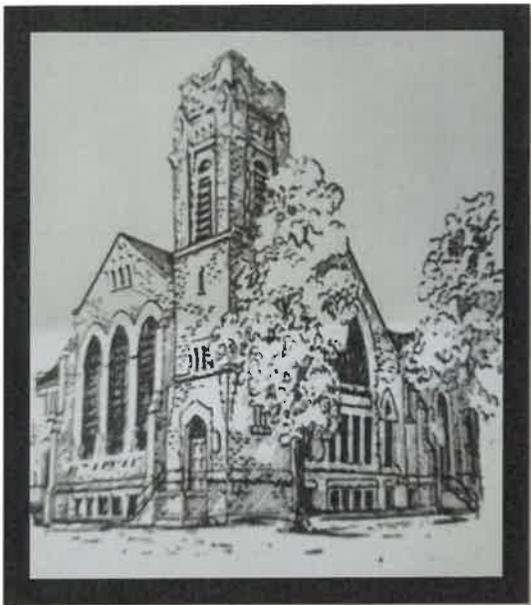


The Gathering

A Monthly Newsletter from Zion Presbyterian Church

April 2026



"I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die."



An exciting day for Brett Robinson (left) as Scott MacDonald takes him on his first trip upstairs in the new elevator with his grandmother, Eleanor Boswell. Thanks to Rob Trainor (right) for painting the church basement.

Liz's Corner

Greetings Brothers and Sisters!!

Welcome April!! Welcome Easter, the sacred season of Hope!! Our celebration of Easter, together with a worldwide community of people praising the name of the Lord Jesus, marks the love that we share and the hope that we have for our very souls. Easter gives us a message of joy, hope, and transformation as we celebrate the resurrection of our Saviour. It is the story of His victory of life, love, and light over death, despair, and darkness.

The night before the cross, Jesus assured His friends of the home we will have with Him.

"My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you?" John 14:2

We are part of a family - God's church, and we live in community with our brothers and sisters in Christ. Until Jesus takes us to the home our hearts long for, we can live in His peace and joy now. We're always home with Him. I think often we trust too much in what we can see.

"We need to live by faith, not by sight." 2 Corinthians 5:

If you always do what you've always done, you will always be where you always were. This is what came to mind during the past month of Lent when I was reading the words of the risen Lord spoken to the disciples and recorded in Luke 24

25 "He said to them, How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter His glory? 27 And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself."

44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms. 45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures."

Only by depending on one another can we experience what God has in store for us and accomplish His amazing plan for our lives.

"He makes the whole body fit together perfectly." Ephesians 4:16

I pray the Lord will continue to open our minds so that we can understand the scriptures more fully. May the resurrection of Christ inspire our faith and renew our hope! Let's embrace His unwavering love, learn to forgive like Him and spread joy in our world. Remember Easter symbolizes the renewal of life. Life is hard and it sometimes hurts. We have to remember our problems and struggles lift us closer to Jesus. Let's put our hope in Jesus fully and not be troubled by the struggles of this world and in life that might tempt us to take our eyes off the only One who can save us!! Praise The Lord!!!

Hallelujah! He is Risen!! He is Risen indeed!!!

Godspeed! Keep the Faith!!

Elizabeth Ferguson





WELL DONE ZOOMERS!

Zion was well represented in support of Harvest House Ministries on the Coldest Night of the Year Walk in February. 27 "Zoomers" raised the highest total that night of over \$8000! Thanks to Beryl Holden (above right) for being once again in charge of the organizing and to Rev. Kirk for contributing the photos.



John Bennet (above right) operates Harvest House, a street level, faith-based ministry on University Avenue offering programs to help marginalized men, women and youth to improve their lives. It has transitional housing for men and provides education with mentorship to help change them from leading a destructive lifestyle to one that is healthy and productive.



If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me.

The cross was a slow, painful, public process the Romans used to dispatch criminals and deter rebels. Jesus was condemned to die on one, first flogged and forced to carry its huge crossbeam 600 meters up a steep path towards Golgotha until he stumbled and was helped. It would not have been a clean, smooth piece of wood but rough, splintered, bloodstained and weighing around 100 lbs - a far cry from the tiny wooden cross we were asked to carry during Lent and which we mailed out to our readers with the newsletter. It was a reminder for us to focus on repentance because Jesus sacrificed himself for our transgressions.

His life, death and resurrection was proof of the power of good over evil. He had enemies. He knew who they were and how they would work against him. In the very beginning, Herod wanted to kill him, and in the end, Judas, one of his own inner circle, betrayed him. His ministry began with a challenge from his greatest antagonist, the devil, tempting him three times in the wilderness to obey him and each time Jesus used the power of scripture to defeat him. But Satan was not giving up - as it says in Luke 4, **"When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him till an opportune time.** And indeed this **"father of lies"** continued to pursue Jesus by constantly working through various people around him to thwart God's plan of salvation, especially the Pharisees who harassed and plotted to get rid of him. Jesus knew beforehand what they and the devil would do to stop him – that Peter, the "rock" would lie three times and deny he knew him and, dramatically in Mark 3 ch8 v 33, he would recognise the work of the devil as Peter rebuked him for predicting his own suffering and death! **"But he turned and said to Peter - Get thee behind me Satan. Thou art a stumbling block unto me for thou mindest not the things of God but the things of men."** After the resurrection however, left in charge of the mission, in 1 Peter 5 v 8 we hear this fisherman caution us to **"Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour."** So how do we stay alert?

Our little Lenten cross can help us and be a daily reminder that the enemy is constantly at work, plotting ruin-not just in the world out there, but in our communities, institutions, in our churches and in us. We cannot underestimate his capacity to destroy what is good by using both dramatic and subtle tactics. He will do his best to tempt us into sin, into despair, into disbelief and disobedience. When we touch the smooth wood of our Lenten cross, so light, inoffensive and even beautiful, it will remind us to be *imitators of Christ* and to remain daily active in foiling Satan's plans. How? By resisting the temptation to compromise in our faith. By making time to mature spiritually. By taking up our cross daily, denying self and leading a lifestyle that is focussed on others, not ourselves. By enriching our prayer life constantly, listening to God and studying His word regularly so we are bearers of His truth and instruments of His love. By ensuring we do not hurt, speak poorly of or reject others but instead be a helper and encourager. By being genuinely and mercifully forgiving even when it is hard. By being ambassadors for Christ and witnesses to what Jesus has done in our own lives and what he did when he was among us. Then others will see something unique and appealing about Christianity that makes them want to be a part of our story and included in our fellowship. Jesus was God's plan A for the world He created: those 12 disciples and the rest of us are plan B. It is quite a responsibility.

As my favourite Scottish theologian and commentator, William Barclay says, *"When we are tempted to despair, we would do well to remember that nothing in the end can frustrate the will of God. The evil will of man can delay God's purpose, but it cannot defeat it."* At Easter the cross, instead of being something fearful, ugly, and despicable, becomes a worldwide symbol of sacrifice, promise of salvation, sign of hope and a beautiful victory over evil and death. How amazing is that?

Joan Cumming



GATHERINGS for Pot Luck and Lenten Lunches continue.



Poor weather did not deter those who enjoyed the Potluck at Zion and a cheerful kitchen crew with some familiar faces was on hand to prepare and serve Lenten Lunch which is organized annually by the Prince Street Churches.



Members of Zion were on hand for the service and Lenten lunch at Central Christian Church, March 4. (Above) Wayne and Judy Proud (in the foreground) and Mariel and Daryl Montgomery enjoy lunch following the service as well as (left), Erroll and Ann Affleck and (right) Phyllis and Calvin MacMillan. Thanks to Gary MacDougall for the pictures.

Please send us any pictures you take of church activities and events you attend! gatheringinfo2025@gmail.com

A Word from Evan

I don't see as many bumper stickers and novelty license plates as I used to. They were common, with plates for favourite hockey teams and bumper stickers that said, "If you can read this you're too close!" The ones I remember best, though, all said some variation of "I'd rather be..." and gave us options like "I'd rather be golfing," "I'd rather be fishing," or "I'd rather be knitting." I'm certain I've never seen one that said "I'd rather be writing for 'The Gathering'."

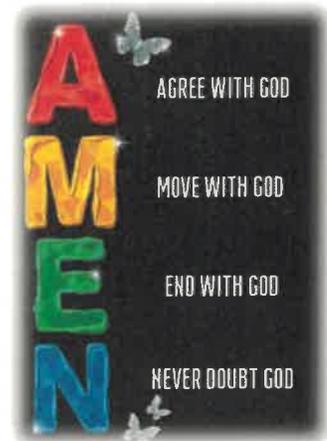
Honesty compels me to admit that there's a basketball game on TV right now I'd rather be watching. It's not like I'm somehow starved for chances to watch; with March Madness just starting, I'm going to see hours and hours of basketball over the next few weeks. What scares me is the fact that I've somehow managed to do the mental gymnastics required to make a couple hours of writing feel like some terrible burden or obligation. To be clear, it isn't. I knew I would need to set aside time to write well in advance, and I could have written it at any point before now if I hadn't foolishly convinced myself there were so many other frivolous things I'd rather be doing.

What are some of the other things that we Christians should be doing that we've somehow twisted into feeling like burdens and obligations? What are we skipping or avoiding because "I'd rather be..." has somehow become a reasonable excuse in our minds? I can practically guarantee that more than one of the billions of Christians in this world have sat in church on a cold January morning and thought "I'd rather be in bed with warm blankets and a hot cup of tea" or spent a sunny July morning thinking "I'd rather be golfing." Worse, there's probably more than one that decided to act on that "I'd rather be..."

If there is anyone who truly understands what being burdened feels like, it is Jesus. After the Last Supper, and before his arrest, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives and prayed to God, saying "**Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.**" (Luke 22:42, NIV) Jesus knows what is coming, knows what His future holds. He's been warning the disciples about what's about to happen for a while now. First, the arrest, beatings, and mockery; then the crucifixion, death, and resurrection. Knowing all this, He asks His Father for a reprieve, that the burden might be lifted from shoulders already bowed under the anticipation of pain and suffering. Surely "I'd rather be..." crossed His mind.

Jesus Christ carried the heaviest burden imaginable. The weight of every sin was laid upon Him, that the life He gave on the cross would lift sin's burden from us all forevermore. There was no obligation for Jesus to do this for us, no way for us to compel or force this sacrifice. What claim could imperfect beings such as you and I have on God's perfect Son? Christ, who has all power over the world and could have saved Himself if He wanted, freely chose to die for us as an act of amazing love.

As a Christian, I hope to keep this wisdom near to my heart, and see that I do things like praying, reading the Bible, and going to church not out of obligation, but as acts of love that I do in response to God's great love for me. I tell others about the Gospel, and yes, I miss most of Duke squeaking out a win over Siena to write some words for 'The Gathering' not because it's a burdensome duty, but because I choose to love the Lord who first loved me.



Around the Church

Dates to remember; April 2, Maundy Thursday, 7pm Communion, April 3, Good Friday Service, April 5, Easter Service, April 12, Dedication of the Lift, April 23, Friends of Faith, April 2, choir at Beach Grove.

Check the calendar for times and dates of Bible Study, Choir, Prayer Group, Knot All Knitters, Youth Activities & meetings.



(Above) Chloe MacLean is thanked for her talk on "Leading with Care" to those involved in ministry at the church, and (left) the group who attended "First Place for Health" workshops with Kelley MacQueen exploring mental, physical, spiritual and nutritional needs

The Last Word-Rev. Allyson MacLeod

After a long winter, it's that time of year when we are all looking forward to warmer and better weather. For at least a couple of days this week, feeling the warmth of the sun on our faces and watching the snow melting, I had that first blush of hope that spring is on the way. Even when there was more fresh snow falling, I was reminded of a phrase we learned in our first ministry charge in Cape Breton, a Gaelic phrase which sounded to my untrained ear something like "snackin a machin," which means, "the snow that brings out the frogs." ('Sneach beag nan losgann' ed.) Think spring peepers! Though we are still experiencing the effects of winter, we have hope that spring is coming.

Like winter, Lent is a long, dark season. It's in a dark time of year, the hymns are slower and moodier, and it marks the long, slow journey to the cross. I am sure none of us really "enjoys" Lent but rather we get through it. We get through it because we have hope; the hope that Easter is on the other side of this sullen journey *and* that the promise of new life in Christ is waiting for us on the other side of the darkness we call death.

We need not rush through Lent but allow ourselves to experience the heaviness of this season while holding onto the hope for that which is to come. It is this hope that will see us through.



April 2026 at Zion Presbyterian Church

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 6:30-Marcato Choir 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	2 NO BIBLE STUDY 2-Choir-Beach Grove Nursing H. 7 pm Maundy Thursday Service- Communion	3 10:30 am Good Friday Service	4
5 EASTER SUNDAY 10:30 -Worship, Children's Ministries 11:30 Fellowship	6	7 10 am Prayer Group NO BIBLE STUDY	8 6:30-Legato 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	9 NO BIBLE STUDY	10	11
12 10:30 - Worship, New Members Children's Ministries Dedication of Lift 11:30 Fellowship	13 6:30 pm Stewardship Committee	14 10 am Prayer Group 6:30 Social Time 7 pm Bible Study	15 6:30 pm Marcato Choir 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	16 9:30 Social Time 10 am Bible Study 6:30 pm Board of Trustees	17	18
19 10:30—Worship, Children's Ministries 11:30 Fellowship	20	21 10 am Prayer Group 6:30 Social Time 7 pm Bible Study	22 6:30 pm Legato 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	23 9:30 Social Time 10 am Bible Study 1 pm—Friends of Faith 6:30 pm Session	24	25
26 10:30 am Worship, Children's Ministries 11:30 Fellowship	27	28 10 am Prayer Group 6:30 Social Time 7 pm Bible Study	29 6:30 pm Marcato Choir 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	30 9:30 Social Time 10 am Bible Study		