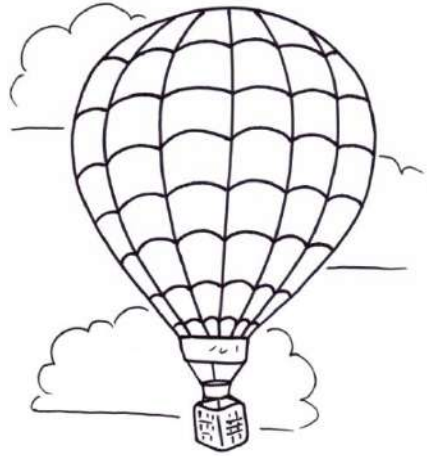


HELP ZION SOAR IN 2024



As we seek to follow the Lord's leading and direction for Zion's ministry, we hope to eliminate our debt during 2024 and increase our impact on the Bay City community and the world.

Prayerfully consider how the Lord can use you in helping us raise \$150,000 to give Zion the opportunity to share Jesus with even more people who desperately need to be connected to Christ and the church. Through your gifts of love, we will stabilize our church's finances, provide financial aid for our school families, and erase our congregational debt. Share your gift to the **SOAR** campaign through the special envelopes or in the memo line of your offering. Speak to Pastor Baerwolf if you would be interested in setting up a matching gift opportunity. Consider a special love offering or a Qualified Charitable Distribution from your IRA or a gift of stock in gratitude for all that He is doing in our church.

What a blessing to be able to provide this help to our beloved Zion congregation.

(Continue reading for a ministry update from Pastor Baerwolf)

Dear Friends,

I love these words from Luke 21... “And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” This is the season of Advent in a nutshell—Jesus is coming again—not as a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes but He is coming as King of kings and Lord of Lords and because of what Jesus has done we are people of hope, people of joy, people who look forward to that day of redemption Jesus has won for us. What a gift from God that He gives us that perspective because of what Jesus Christ has done for us by dying on the cross and rising from the grave.

As our church year ended, we focused on the gracious gift from God that He has brought us ALL ABOARD the good ship of His Church and we pray that God would give us the opportunity to steward all that He has given to us to His glory. Nearly 60 households pledged to continue their support of Zion’s ministry and the ALL ABOARD special offering raised over \$18,000 in gifts to the General Fund. Thank you for your prayers and participation in the ALL ABOARD stewardship focus these months—what a blessing to bring our gifts of love to the King of love and to prepare and plan for how God will guide us in using the treasure He has given to us.

Our Trunk and Treat celebration was a festive gathering for many in our school community—God provided us with just the right weather conditions preventing the rain from falling until we were done and being able to welcome close to 200 families and friends to our church campus.

Through our support of the Food of Faith ministry, more than 200 warm meals were shared with people in Bay City—what an amazing gift we share with those around us as we feed the hungry and care for the poor in our communities. Our Food Pantry is already brimming with the gifts of God’s people as we prepare for our Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations—it is amazing to see the generosity of so many within our church who help to provide for the least of these in our midst.

It is remarkable to witness life and ministry here at Zion. Our Bible classes have seen some wonderful growth from Tuesday night to Thursday morning to our Sunday morning gatherings, what a blessing to invest time into studying God's Word as we are fed by the Bread of Life, our Savior Jesus.

What a blessing these last few days to witness our Advent and Christmas services—we are so grateful for the many volunteers who offer their talents and time so that worship is engaging and focused on our Savior Jesus. It was phenomenal to see God's people fill church for our festive worship services.

Our faculty and staff continue to provide academic excellence and spiritual leadership for the children and families we are privileged to serve here at Zion. How wonderful that our students join us for singing opportunities in worship—thanks so much for welcoming them to the Lord's house. I am also grateful for our church staff who every day are committed to the work of Zion.

Thanks as well to our administrative staff at school for their boundless energy, their commitment to quality Christian education and their love for Jesus. I am humbled by Mrs. Reese and Ms. Kussro and their ability to wade through so many difficult issues associated with growing our school ministry. Along with the continued guidance and wisdom of Dr. Frederick, their commitment to all that we are doing here at Zion is remarkable and I know that you join me in thanking God for them and the service they are sharing with us.

If you haven't had the opportunity, please walk through our school building. Through your generous gifts to the Lanes 2 Learning initiative so much improvement to our campus has taken place. Our lockers were refurbished, giving our hallways a fresh look while more secure doors were added to each classroom. Advanced security measures have been installed providing us with the ability to care for our kids and staff. A new roof was installed over the gym providing years of protection. So many Trust Fund projects were granted for our school classrooms, meaning more technology and furniture which our students and their families can experience. Our school gym was painted through an anonymous gift to our church—it is beautiful and bright—what a gift to our school families.

Thanks as well for the Voters' Assembly ratification of our new budget and budgeting cycle. Our Call Committee for the full-time principal position has been meeting during these weeks to do some planning and interviewing of those candidates shared by the congregation and the Michigan District. Continue to pray that God blesses our search for a principal.

Your Church Administrative Board has signed the Zion Covenant—an opportunity for each of us to affirm our part in building up the body of Christ and supporting each other through our words and actions. I am so grateful for our Board of Elders and leadership team in directing these efforts and recognizing the need to help all of us focus on what unites us as the people of God here at Zion.

The Lord continues to bless our church's finances in some amazing ways. God's people gave more than \$535,000 through their offerings and gifts to the General Fund. Through tuition and other school fees, we received nearly \$449,000. Our expenses for 2023 were budgeted to be nearly \$1,375,000 but through the sacrifice and service of our many volunteers and our church and school staff, we reported expenses of just under \$1,001,000. This is a remarkable achievement as we consider the rising costs of so many goods and services and that we were able to do so much with so little for which we thank the Lord.

Although we finished the year with a deficit, we are so grateful that God continues to provide for the needs of our blessed ministry, and we look forward to the pledges promised through the ALL ABOARD stewardship appeal and the SOAR campaign to give us even more financial stability for this new year.

Our Finance team has been working diligently to identify how we handle our finances, and we are searching for volunteers who might want to help us in this important ministry. Your church and school staff are focused every day on being vigilant about what we are spending and are seeking out revenue enhancements for all that we are doing at Zion.

With you, I look forward to that Day when Jesus returns and takes us home to heaven. Until then, we worship and work together rejoicing in the good gifts that God gives to us especially celebrating the "Word made flesh", our Savior Jesus.

Peace and joy—Pastor Baerwolf