

REPORT TO THE CONGREGATION
Zion Lutheran Church, Warroad, MN
 (April 14, 2022)

What We Learned About Zion

The heart of Zion is a love of God and a response to God's love. We express our love in worship, serving others, sharing God's love with others, and supporting one another.

- In our worship, we value faithful preaching, meaningful worship services and music (singing and instrumental).
- In our serving, we use our gifts and abilities to help others. We do this when we make quilts, school bags, do food packings, reach out with We Care, support the community food shelf, and work on projects for "God's work. Our hands."
- In our sharing God's love with others, we disciple children and youth through Sunday School, Vacation Bible School, Pre-confirmation and Confirmation instruction. We are involved in Adult Bible Studies through Women's Circles and the Men's Bible Study.
- In our supporting one another, we value times we eat and fellowship together. We have Coffee Fellowship after worship, Lenten meals before Lenten services, occasional Sunday meals and the October Harvest Festival. GriefShare supports those who are grieving the death of a loved one.

Zion has an abundance of **resources**.

- The Christian faith
 - The Gospel of salvation, confession, and forgiveness [healing of relationship with God and others]
 - The Word [the person of Jesus, written (Bible), edible (Holy Communion) and adopting (Baptism)]
 - The Holy Spirit [calls us to faith, empowers, equips]
 - Worship
- People:
 - A full-time pastor
 - 475 baptized members (390 confirmed members)
 - Musicians (organists, pianists, drummer, bass guitarist, choir/bell directors, singers and bell players)
 - Two office staff, one custodian, treasurer, incoming funds director
 - Teachers for Sunday School, Pre-Confirmation and Confirmation
 - People who run sound equipment and PowerPoint slides
 - Members trained in drama
 - Members who are retired as: teachers, medical/mental health personnel, professionals and managers, property/maintenance, farmers, truckers, accountants

- Building
 - New mission center
 - Worship area, 5 office spaces, 8 meeting rooms (1 with kitchenette), assembly room, gathering space, sitting area, coffee bar, large kitchen, “cry” room for children, sacristy, music storeroom
 - Adequate parking space
 - Playground equipment, basketball hoop
 - Land and open space
 - Bell tower/music
- Financial
 - Strong financial giving
 - Our new mission center will be paid for in 2023
- Equipment
 - Sound equipment
 - Radio broadcast (for many years)
 - 3 TVs, 2 large screens in worship area
 - Organ
 - Grand piano, 2 electric pianos
 - Bell sets (large bells, chimes, children’s bells)
- Groups
 - Church Council
 - Council Committees (Congregational Care, Christian Education, Endowment Fund, Memorials, Property, Stewardship, Worship)
 - Women of Zion (Circles)
 - Men’s Bible Study
 - GriefShare
 - Banner makers
 - Choir
 - Bell choir
 - Worship band

As Zion worships, serves, shares God’s love, and supports one another, we recognize we are **best at**:

- Worship
 - Engaging in worship, congregational participation and singing
 - Choral and bell choirs, Worship band and soloists
 - Cohesion of worship and content
- Work projects
 - Quilting
 - We Care
 - “God’s work. Our hands.”
- Fund raising
 - Generous in supporting children/youth
 - 4th of July Breakfast
 - Money for School Backpacks
 - Paying for our new mission center is nearing completion (2023)

- Volunteering is strong when asked
- Artistic (banners, decorating)
- Hospitable
 - Funeral luncheons
 - Outreach to others (see work projects above)

What We Discovered About Our Community and its Needs

Through interviews with key leaders in the Warroad community, we learned about the following needs in our community.

- Children and youth
 - Older kids have needs that could be filled by a pantry at school
 - Homework help is needed for kids (tutoring/technical needs)
 - Money for special speakers at school
 - Lack of daycare
 - No backpack program for the high school (they would be embarrassed)
 - Safe place for kids to hang out or go to
 - Licensed foster care
 - Local public safety could use comfort items when dealing with traumatic situations
- Families
 - Lack of available daycare (Parents are unable to work outside the home because they need daycare)
 - 30% of families are single parent
 - Parenting skills (finances, church/faith)
 - In need of basic necessities (vehicle repair, beds/bedding, tables/chairs, hygiene items)
- Mental Health
 - Impacts all ages
 - Drugs/Alcohol/Depression/Anxiety/Suicidal ideation
 - Addictions (gambling, alcohol, drugs, prescription drugs)
 - Grief/loss
 - Bullying
- Medical
 - People do not tend to their health needs in a timely way,
 - Life-long Vaccinations are neglected
 - Lack of medical providers
- Older Adults
 - Isolation
 - No public transportation
- Public needs
 - No public transportation
 - Lack of housing
- Community unity
 - No newspaper
 - A need to bring people together

What We Know About God's Mission and Zion's Particular Purpose

Zion has a passion to reach out and help others in need. We have an abundance of love, caring and compassion. We have a new facility that is available for use in more ways than it is currently being used. The members of Zion are generous with their time, abilities, and finances. We have a passion to help our neighbors in need but have noted we need a vehicle in our structure to facilitate the mobilization of our tremendous resources into mission.

Upon reviewing Warroad's needs and Zion's resources, gifts and passion, the Practicing Resurrection Team recommends three goals: a new council committee that reaches out to the needs of the community (Community Concerns Committee), a daycare housed at Zion and developing a full-time Children/Youth/Family ministry.

Zion's Future Story

You are invited to attend a celebration! On Sunday, May 23, 2027, Zion Lutheran Church in Warroad, MN, will celebrate the 10th anniversary¹ of worshiping in its new mission center. The anniversary worship celebration will include the NW MN Synod's bishop who will preach, Holy Communion and Zion's choirs with a festive meal following.

How has being in this new mission center enabled Zion to further Christ's mission in the Warroad community? In 2021, a team of five Zion members and their pastor took part in Practicing Resurrection, a synod initiative, which led the group in studying Warroad's demographics and community needs. Upon evaluating the information gathered through interviews and statistical reports, coupled with Zion's resources, "best at" and passions, they discerned God's leading and guiding, envisioning God's mission through Zion.

An outcome of the Practicing Resurrection process was adding a Community Concerns Committee to the slate of Council Committees to better facilitate Zion's outreach in the community. Ministries already active at Zion such as God's Work Our Hands, Food Packing and We Care, became an arm of this committee. Upon this committee's inception, it connected Zion with a pantry at Warroad High School for older students, homework help for kids of all ages, raising funds for special speakers at the Warroad School, and envisioning a safe space for kids to hang out by collaborating with Warroad's city council and other community leaders. Comfort items (stuffed animals, snuggle blankets, toys) for children experiencing trauma are being donated to Public Safety (ambulance, fire, police). Four-year-old Angie who lost her treasured dolls when her home burned to the ground, beamed with joy when she received a Raggedy Ann doll made by Carol Hallan. For members of the community who need transportation to doctor appointments, a system was set up connecting them with drivers. Agnus' daughter and son who live in Texas and Utah are relieved that their mother can make it to her much needed appointments in Grand Forks with a cardiac specialist.

The Practicing Resurrection team also identified a pronounced need for daycare in the community. The team presented the possibility of a daycare at Zion to the church

¹ Zion's first worship service in its new facility was May 21, 2017.

council. The council was convinced it was worth having a conversation with the congregation about having a daycare at Zion. When the possibility of a daycare at Zion was presented to the congregation at a forum, some people were opposed. Would the children be too noisy and negatively impact the work of the staff? Would the staff's work be sidelined with phone calls and questions from parents? Some Zion members thought that the rooms for the daycare would be too small for active children and wondered if we had adequate facilities. Others thought that the daycare children would damage walls and property.

But there were other members who told stories of how they knew of some mothers that would love to go back to work but were unable because of the lack of daycare in our area. Joe and Joan Olafson shared how they would take care of daycare children in their home when a daycare provider became ill. They had first-hand knowledge of the daycare need.

It was agreed that a special task force would be formed to investigate the requirements for daycares in MN and investigate other questions members had. The task force interviewed Kristi Thompson and Jenny Voll, two Zion members who are home daycare providers. These connections helped provide the task force with MN State Daycare guidelines. The task force also contacted Grace Lutheran in Hallock which had opened a daycare in its facilities in 2020.

The information gleaned from this task force was forwarded to Zion's council. Upon prayer, review and then approval, the council set a date for another conversation with the congregation regarding a daycare. The congregational conversation went so well, the council decided it was time to have a congregational vote on the matter. The congregation voted to approve a small daycare housed at Zion. Upon the opening of Zion's Daycare, it immediately had a waiting list of interested families.

Since Zion's daycare is housed in a church, the daycare teachers and assistants speak openly about the Christian faith with the children and parents on a day-to-day basis. The daycare reaches out with opportunities for parents to learn parenting and financial skills as well as teach them how to share their faith with their children. Since families become acquainted with Zion through its building and staff, they feel comfortable attending worship at Zion since the daycare children are also included in worship experiences and Sunday School opportunities. Since Warroad has a shortage of workers, Zion's daycare center gives parents the opportunity to work outside the home and help support the economy of the community. Sheila and Tim said that the daycare was an answer to prayer. They both needed to work to support their family and pay for their mortgage. It had been impossible for them to find daycare so that both could work.

A third need the Practicing Resurrection team identified was outreach from our congregation to children, youth, and families. Zion decided to add a full-time staff person to expand and enhance its ministry with children, youth, and families. The person who filled that position had been a camp counselor with Pathways Lutheran Outdoor Ministries and was looking for a full-time position in a congregation.

The Children/Youth/Family Ministry has blossomed at Zion. One aspect of this ministry is intergenerational involvement. Gerald, a mentor to a 9th grade confirmand, said that all adult members need the opportunity to be a mentor because when he mentored Thomas, he feels it challenged him in his own spiritual faith and growth.

A key component of the youth ministry at Zion is youth doing ministry. Every other year, tenth through twelfth grade students are given the opportunity to receive Peer Ministry Training which teaches them listening skills and knowledge of resources in the community to effectively walk alongside peers who are in crisis.

The youth are also involved in ministry by taking part in worship leadership and children's ministries (i.e., Sunday School and VBS). In addition, they do fund-raisers to support the Youth Pantry at Warroad High School. But what Rachel, an 11th grader, says she is pumped up the most is the mission trips. During a mission trip, they travel to an area that needs help whether it is building a Habitat for Humanity House, teaching VBS at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, or serving meals to the homeless in Minneapolis. She loves helping others at the same time growing in her faith during the nightly devotionals and gaining new friends with those on the mission trip.

When Zion moved into its new mission center ten years ago, the members did not know where God would lead them in mission. As Zion reaches out to the community through its Community Concerns Committee, Daycare, and Children/Youth/Family Ministry, the members are grateful that God is using them in new ways to reach out in love and service to the community of Warroad.

How We Might Get There **Zion's Capacity Plan**

Community Concerns Committee

The purpose of the Community Concerns Committee will be to facilitate Zion's outreach in the community.

- The council will form this six-member committee (C13.06). No congregational vote will be necessary to form the committee. It will receive new members each year at the annual meeting (2 outgoing, 2 incoming, 3-year terms).
- Members of this committee need to have a passion for community outreach and concerns, have organizational skills, be respected in the congregation and community, have good communication skills and strong leadership abilities relating to the congregation.
- This committee will be prayerful about where God is leading Zion in community outreach.

Daycare

The purpose of Zion's Daycare is to fill a pronounced need for daycare in the Warroad community. Availability of daycare is a consistent problem.

- When Zion establishes a daycare in its building, members will need to let go of any fears of building wear and tear and possible disruptions.
- Zion has the facilities and space for a daycare. Our building may need to be updated for any daycare requirements such as bathrooms adequate for children.
- A daycare provider and other staffing will be needed.
- We will need to learn what the State Guidelines are for Daycares and other legal requirements.

- We will reach out to two Zion members who are Daycare providers (Kristi Thompson and Jenny Voll). We will contact First Lutheran in Hallock about its daycare that was started in 2020.
- Zion is willing to front the costs knowing there will be costs in the start-up phase. The goal is a financially self-sufficient daycare.
- We will need to know what is needed in the daycare room(s).
- Volunteers will be intergenerational as especially our older members could help by reading stories or other interactions (i.e., puzzles).

Children/Youth/Family Ministry

The purpose of Zion's Children/Youth/Family Ministry is to support our children and youth in their faith journey, empowering parents/guardians in training their children in the faith.

- Zion needs to let go of part-time support and minimal financial support of our youth ministry. Therefore, we will make a commitment to our youth by enlarging our budget for children/youth/family ministry. We will investigate how other congregations in the area support such a ministry in their congregation (i.e., Messiah, Roseau). We may expand the outreach of the endowment fund to include support of this position.
- We will be looking for a staff person who has expertise in children/youth/family ministries. This person needs to love kids and have the knowledge to help them in their faith journey.
- We have the space for children and youth in our new mission center. Although we do not have large indoor spaces for play, we will investigate using the school gym and pool since other churches use the school for their youth groups.

Practicing Resurrection Team

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