



Welcome to Zion UCC

"Be Opened"

Zion United Church of Christ

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 8, 2024

*Stand in body or spirit.

*(Join in speaking aloud the **bolded** portions.)*

Prelude

Coming Together to Share the Light

Greeting & Proclamation

"I have no idea what's awaiting me, or what will happen when this all ends. For the moment I know this: there are sick people, and they need curing."

~ Albert Camus, 20th Century

Welcome and Announcements

Litany of Sunday Celebration

Where are the teachers in our midst who will guide us as we learn? **We follow Christ's example and learn from one another!**

Where are Jesus' disciples, who thirst to know God's ways? **We follow Christ's example and learn from one another!**

Our church is this sacred space, and our classroom is the world. **We follow Christ's example and learn from one another!**

Thanks be to God for new beginnings, for new opportunities to learn together! **We follow Christ's example and learn from one another! AMEN.**

Prayer of Invocation

The Prayer of Jesus

(All are invited to use whatever language and wording are most comfortable.)

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us *our sins/debts/trespases*, as we forgive *our debtors/those who sin/trespass against us*. And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. AMEN.

A Lesson for All Ages

Blessing of the Backpacks

*** Hymn of Celebration # 5**

"O for a Thousand Tongues to Sing"

Prayer for Our Humanity

... we stop looking rather than see and respond to those in need.

Forgive our pretense, so that we may open ourselves to unexpected teachers, to fresh ideas, to one another, to you. Forgive our neglect so that we may care for one another and follow the example you set for us. This we pray this in the name of Jesus the Christ. AMEN.

Silence for Reflection

Assurance of Pardon

... begin anew through God's everlasting mercy and love. **Thanks be to God! Alleluia! AMEN.**

Message in Music "*For the Joy of Music*"

First Scripture Lesson

Proverbs 22:1-2, 8-9, 22-23

Psalter Lesson # 766 w/ R "*Psalm 146*"

***Gospel Lesson** Mark 7:24-37

This is the Gospel of Christ.

Thanks be to God.

Meditation Pastor Craig

***Hymn of Reflection # 588**

"Have Thine Own Way, Lord"

Invitation to Joyful Giving

Offertory

***Doxology**

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow;
praise him all creatures here below;
praise him above, ye heavenly host:
praise Father Son, and Holy Ghost.*

***Sung Prayer of Dedication** (sung to tune above)

*Praise Love who made all time and space;
praise love who came in truth and grace;
Praise Love on humankind outpoured,
that all may love forevermore. AMEN.*

Sharing Our Joys & Concerns

A Prayer for Sunday

***Closing Hymn # 357**

"We Call Ourselves Disciples"

Benediction

Bring Light out into the World

Postlude

We Focus on Our Life Together...

Thank you for choosing to worship with us this morning. No matter who or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here! Please join us downstairs in The Gathering Place for refreshments and fellowship following this morning's service.

Leader: Pastor Craig Sparks

Musicians: Clinton Adams & Thad Paulhamus

Message in Music: Zion UCC Choir

In Our Thoughts and Prayers...

Bryan Barbalace, Kevin Barbalace, Charlene Berk, Cheryl Blackburn, June Bocek*, Les & Vivian Bowser*, Les Bowser Jr, Casey Brewer, Pastor Larry Fisher*, Anna Denoe*, Anna Golden, Tom Hayman, Marie Kachinski, Henry & Gerri Krotee, Barbara Langenfelder*, John Langenfelder, Barbara Makin, Pete Mitchell, Joyce Murphy, Gloria Nethkin, Betty Nolte*, Judith Panian*, John Pflugrad, Shirley Ritter*, Elaine Roberts, Carol Shrader, Emily Sturm, Barbara Thompson, Nancy Zaharis*, service men & women, the people of Israel, Palestine, and Ukraine. Peace on Earth. *Shut-ins

This week at Zion...

- 9:** Busy Hands (10 am) Upper Hall
Turner Seniors (11 am) Lower Hall
Church Council (7 pm) Gathering Place
- 10:** Bible Study (6 pm) Gathering Place
Choir Rehearsal (7 pm)
N.A. "Stronger Ties" (7 pm) Lower Hall
- 12:** Women's Guild (11 am) Lower Hall
- 14:** Book Sale & Thrift Shop (10-1) Lower Hall
- 15:** Worship – Pastor Craig (10 am)
Sunday School in Nursery during worship
Gathering Place follows service (downstairs)

Save the Date...

On Sunday, October 13th, Zion will be holding an "Open House" for our members, friends, and the community following worship. Take a tour of the newly renovated Caretaker's house, visit the Scout Cabin to check out the ongoing restoration project, stroll our campus, and check out Pastor Craig's new office. The Miss Twist Ice Cream Truck will be onsite too! More details will follow in the next few weeks!

Sunday School News...

Children are invited to join us downstairs in the Church Nursery/Sunday School Room after the "Lesson for All Ages" to make a small craft, hear a bible story, and have some little people fellowship. We will also meet next Sunday, the 15th. Starting in October we will resume our regular schedule of meeting the 1st and 3rd Sunday of each month.

Please support our Cabin Fundraiser...



Why spend \$5 for a 7-ounce bag of peanuts?

- Because they are delicious!
- Because there is a coupon for a free appetizer at Texas Roadhouse attached to it!
- Because \$4 of each \$5 bag of peanuts goes directly to the cabin fund!

The bags of peanuts will be available in a basket in the narthex. They are self-serve, just place your \$5 in the can next to the basket and take a bag.

If anyone wants to help by selling some to family or friends, contact Jane Anderson at 410-598-2110 or email janeanderson8@comcast.net. Even if you can only sell a few bags, that would be terrific!

Many thanks to Texas Roadhouse for supplying this unique fundraising opportunity.

Coming up: A Concert of Hymns...

The Zion Music Ministry will present a concert of newly composed hymn tunes in our sanctuary on Sunday, October 6 at 5:00 p.m.

These hymns, comprised of well-known hymn texts, sung to new and different tunes, will be sung by members of the Zion Choir, along with additional singers.

Anyone who likes to sing in the congregation, or is a friend of the Church, is invited to come and be an additional singer. We hope the project will be a good time for all who sing as well as all who listen.

Preparation for the concert on the four Sundays of September (8th, 15th, 22nd and 29th), with a final run-through on Saturday, October 5th. All practices will take place at 5:00 p.m.

It is hoped that the new melodies may bring the noble, traditional texts into new focus, so that the prayers of these poems may find a renewed meaning to those who sing and hear them. We hope that everyone who takes part in this exercise will find the effort enjoyable, and the music meaningful.

With this performance, our Music Director, Thad Paulhamus (who has composed the tunes) will officially begin his sixty-first year of service as a sacred musician. Come, join the celebration!

Women's Guild News...

The Zion Women's Guild will hold our annual "fall kick-off" meeting this coming Thursday, September 14th at 11:00 a.m. in the hall dining room. The guest speaker will be from the Baltimore County Department of Aging... all are welcome to attend this informative presentation. As always, we look forward to greeting old friends and meeting new ones.

Bible Study News...

Please join us for our weekly Bible Study every Tuesday evening at 6 p.m. in "The Gathering Place" (located in the church basement). Each week is a stand-alone session and will focus on a different scripture reading, feel free to attend whenever you are available. If you have questions, please contact Pastor Craig. All are welcome... come join us!

Fall and Holiday Craft Show...

Saturday, October 5th - 9:00 AM to 1:00 PM on the lower level of the education building. 6'x10' spaces are available for \$20.00! (a limited number of tables will be available to rent for an additional \$5.00) Food will be available for purchase! Zion Women's Guild Used Book Sale will also be open. Flyers with more details and registration forms for vendors are available in the narthex this morning. For more information, please see Mary Ann Bantz or Tim Dalgo with any questions. Hope to see you on 10/5!

UCC MISSION MOMENT
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost
Be Opened Mark 7:24-37

Can you imagine your life being changed for the better with just a gentle touch, a loving word or even a compassionate smile?

The people we encounter in Mark's Gospel can. Their stories, packed into what is the shortest of the four gospels, tell of how the Son of God brings healing and hope to all he meets.

Rich, poor, men, women, children, sinners, outcasts — it doesn't matter who you are. There's nothing Jesus can't do to turn our lives around. But for that to happen, we must ask: Are we opened to the Divine impossible possibilities?

Mark brings us today a perfect illustration of new life in the healing of the deaf and mute man. In the story, Jesus starts by placing his fingers in the deaf man's ears. Jesus is acknowledging nonverbally his understanding of what the problem is. It's a loving act that puts the man at ease.

He then spits on his fingers and touches the deaf man's tongue. Yes, a cringy moment for our modern sensibilities, but spit was believed to have healing qualities in ancient times.

The final step in this healing comes with Jesus' sigh, "Ephphatha!" — which is Aramaic for "be opened." And with that, a man whose life was

closed from the community because of his disability, opens to belonging and acceptance.

The word "Ephphatha" only appears eight times in the New Testament, almost always with stories of healing. It is a word, though, that we should add to our spiritual vocabularies, as the reminder to "be opened" is an important one in the healing of whatever needs to be healed in our lives.

Too often doubt and cynicism take over our lives, closing us off to the healing of body, mind and spirit. Yet Jesus sees our situations and sighs, "Be opened!" For what has being closed to God's possibilities done for us?

In the Catholic tradition there is an optional baptismal rite that parents can request as part of the sacrament where the priest says a prayer as he touches the infant's ears and then mouth. The prayer is for the child to hear God's voice and to speak of God's grace as they grow. As you might have already guessed, it is known as the Ephphatha Rite.

Take a moment this day to touch your ears and then your mouth, praying to hear the Divine speaking to you and for the grace to speak words of love.

Caring Healer, may today we "be opened" to the many ways you are renewing, reviving and restoring us. May we hear Your Son's loving word spoken to us now and always, "Ephphatha!" Amen.

Zion UCC Church Staff

Ministers	All members of Zion UCC	
Craig S. Sparks	Pastor	443-896-6815 Email: <i>craigssparks@gmail.com</i>
Tim Dalgo, Sr.	Administrator	410-608-1670 Email: <i>info@zionuccmd.com</i>
Joan Jordan	President	443-791-7344 Email: <i>doosmom2@gmail.com</i>
Thad Paulhamus	Music Director	443-610-7844
Clinton Adams	Musician	
The Rev. C. Larry Fisher, The Rev. Hugh Nash Pastor Emeriti		

Administrative Office: 410-687-0980

- * Press 1 to leave voicemail message
- * Press 3 to contact Council President
- * Press 4 to contact Cemetery

Pastor Craig will be in the office on Tuesday and Thursday from 2:30 to 4:00 pm. The phone and email continue to be monitored, and all incoming mail is processed daily. For your convenience, you may leave your offering envelopes in the locked mailbox on the office side porch. Messengers, Bulletins, and Upper Room Devotionals are also available.

If you require pastoral services, please call Pastor Craig Sparks at 443-896-6815 or send an email to *craigssparks@gmail.com*.

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