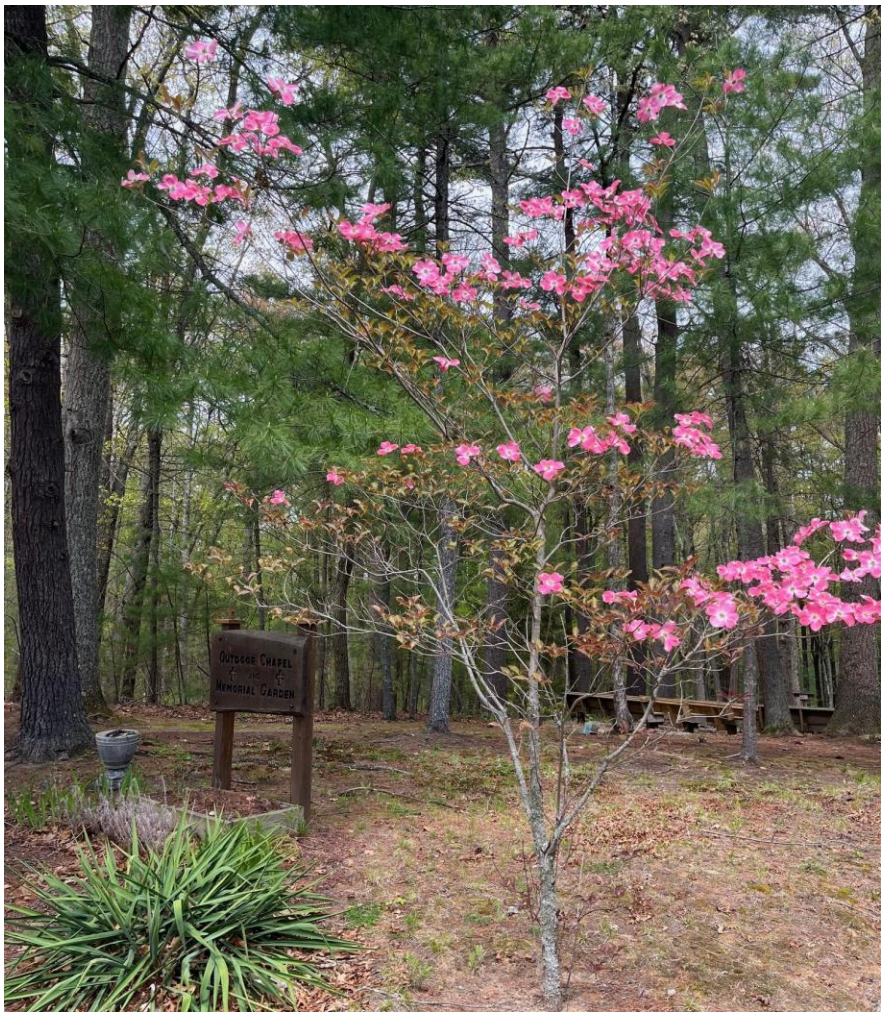


Church of Reconciliation • Episcopal Diocese of Western MA
Zion Lutheran Church • New England Synod, ELCA



Joint Newsletter- July/August 2026

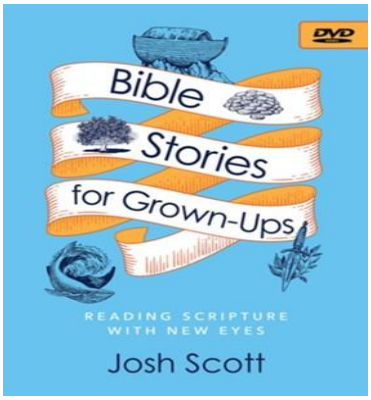


Why the Bible Matters.

Zion Lutheran donates 40 Bibles to inmates at the Cybulski Correctional Institution in Somers, CT. Back in the Spring, I received an email from the New England Synod asking congregations for donations of Bibles to Cybulski. I reached out to Chaplain Joe McGarry and offered 40 Bibles from Zion. A few months later, we met at Synod Assembly and sat down together. He told me that by donating Bibles for the inmates at Cybulski, congregations become part of God's work of bringing light into dark places and hope into hurting hearts. A Bible is more than a book in this setting. It is comfort for the grieving, strength for the struggling and a living reminder that grace still reaches every person. Chaplain McGarry shared with me that he meets in his work many men who show up looking for hope, direction and a reminder that they are not forgotten. Many of them are asking for something simple but life-giving: a Bible they can hold in their own hands, read in their own cell, and return to when the days feel heavy. God's Word becomes a steady companion in a place where fear, regret and loneliness can feel overwhelming. Chaplain Joe concluded that the need is greater than the supply. He is grateful that Zion Lutheran is among the congregations in the NE Synod who responded with donations of Bibles.

I recently finished reading Josh Scott's *Bible Stories for Grown-Ups: Reading Scripture with New Eyes*. It has been my observation that too many folks in congregations I've served in Germany and the U.S. stopped doing formal Christian formation after Confirmation. It seems to me that many are still stuck in time in a Confirmation class when it comes to opening and reading the Bible. This little book offers a step forward, especially for beginners. But it also offers a nice review for people who want to give this book another deeper look. Scott looks at familiar Bible stories for an adult audience.

He includes stories many of us first read as children, including Noah's Ark, the binding of Isaac, Jonah and the big fish, Jesus and Zacchaeus, Jesus healing a blind man, and the parable of the talents. In *Bible Stories for Grown-Ups,* Scott reimagines these stories and opens new visions for readers to understand well known pieces of Scripture in our current cultural environment. Perhaps you will consider Summertime as an opportunity to catch up on some reading of scripture. I believe you'll enjoy Scott's book and also deepen your level of Biblical literacy.



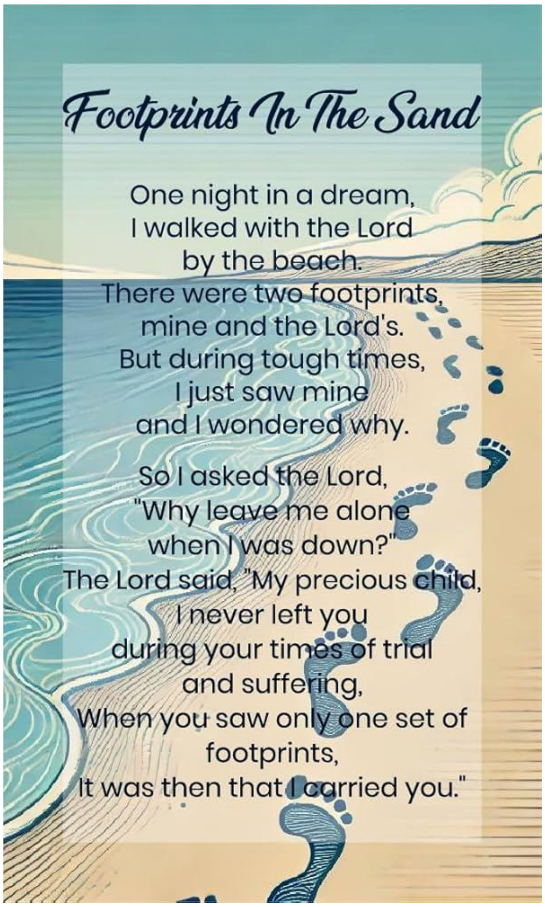
Have a blessed summer ~ Pr. Michael +

Admin's Corner

"Footprints in the Sand" is a poem that all Christians know. Written by Margaret Powers in 1964, it depicts a person's dream of walking along the beach with the Lord, and looking back on their life. The person notices that there is often only one set of footprints, and that these are at the lowest times of life. And the Lord replies that these times are when the person is carried by the Lord.

Friends in Christ, I come to you with an open and honest heart. As I read this poem and the accompanying book of reflections, I found myself shedding many tears. I am in the early stages of grieving the loss of my father, Emanuele. I must admit that his passing was not unexpected, yet the depth and intensity of this grief have taken me by surprise. While I knew this day would come, I was unprepared for the profound sorrow that accompanies such a loss.

And this poem, as the devotional book shows, has a lot more to it than meets the eye. It shows that God is with us in our dreams, Our Daily Walk with Him, our loneliness, as our companion and much more.



God is with us in our dreams, Powers states "to assure us of His Promises…and help us understand them" I know this, dear friends, because I would not be sitting here as an admin today otherwise, God is with us on our Daily Walk with Him, as Powers states "A joyful heart is a mark of one who has a consistent walk with the Lord' and friends, I am so joyful to be here.

God is with us in our loneliness, and I have never felt so lonely- in the house which was so full of Manny every day, and his presence is so much missed in the quiet. But when we all feel lonely, we must remember "that we are so lovingly looked looked after by God that Isiah tells us we are "engraved on the palms of [His] hands and Deuteronomy promises "The eternal God is your refuge and underneath is your everlasting arms"

Lastly the devotional book touches on how God is with us always and carries us through the hard times, (even through Chris and I cannot possibly see how we'll be getting through this), Powers ends the book with one simple statement: "Our God is strong enough to carry us, but also gentle enough to enfold us in His Loving embrace" So whatever it is your carrying, joy, heaviness, sorrow, or unimaginable grief, God will carry you through. Sometimes one set of footprints in the sand is better than two.

God’s peace,

Admin Maria

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Congratulations Graduates!
From Church of the Reconciliation



Ryan Crosby with his mother Karen. Ryan graduated from Bay Path Regional Vocational Technical High School on May 31. He will be attending Quinsigamond Community College in the fall.



Cristina Sage graduated from URI with her BS in Animal Science. She is with her parents (Nancy and Stefan), girlfriend, aunt and cousin.



Fayelinn (Daughter of Tiffany Poplawskii) graduated from the Colburn Dance Academy in Los Angeles, California and will join The Los Angeles Ballet as a trainee this coming fall



Samantha Kaliszewski (daughter of John and Donna) graduated from Umass Chan Medical School.



OXFORD ECUMENICAL FOOD SHELF COLLECTION

With summer coming the Oxford Food Shelf will be packing boxes for families with children who will be home for the summer. Donations of "kid friendly" cereal would be greatly appreciated!!

Donations Needed

Recently, Zion received a thank you letter from St. Pauly Textile Inc thanking us for partnering with them by locating a shed on our property and by filling it with our textile recyclables.. Please bring your bagged clothing, shoes, towels, sheets, stuffed animals, etc on the Sunday after Easter to fill the shed again. Declutter, recycle to people in need and help us earn a bit of money.



The next Joint Worship service is July 19th 2026 at 10am at the Church of the Reconciliation with an Ice cream social after worship!

Joint Worship will also take place in August on the 16th at 10am at Zion Lutheran Church.



A Celebration of Life will be held for Emanuele (Manny) Gurriere on July 16th 2026, at 11am at Good Shepherd, Oxford, MA. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made to the Alzheimer's Association, 320 Nevada Street, Suite 201, Newton, MA 02460.

ZION SUNDAY SCHOOL SNIPPETS

Submitted by Paula Kilian Clark



Our last weeks of Sunday School were busy! On Holy Trinity Sunday Trinity Sunday, the children divided large circles into three brightly colored segments, one for the Father, one for the Son and one for the Holy Spirit. A heart designated God, a flame or dove represented the Holy Spirit and a cross signified the Son. The children lead the congregation in singing "Three in One" to the tune of "Frere Jacques." A delicious surprise awaited our singers after service. Three jumbo donuts decorated with musical notes were presented to them by the Ide family as special recognition for their beautiful singing of "Holy Spirit, Give Us Power" on Pentecost!

On Flag Day, brainstorming and gratitude for the blessings and opportunities enjoyed in the USA were shared as the children made paper Stars and Stripes flags on poster board. Each student then spun the globe to find two countries that interested them and added the locations to their posters. Jesus loves people in every country and wants us to love all

people too. During closing prayers, children asked for blessings on the countries of their choice.

New "Jesus Rocks" for the outdoor chapel were painted in the last two weeks of Sunday School. The children are very excited to present them on June 21. Even our youngest can now pray "The Lord's Prayer!" They have worked hard to understand the meanings of some of the more difficult words and look forward to leading the prayer for the congregation with Pastor Michael on June 21st as well. Thank you, parents, for practicing with them at home.



As this year closes, I look back in gratitude for many good things. Thank you, Caitlyn Costello and Kirsten Larson, for your hands on assistance in our arts and crafts time. Thank you, Amira, who so willing works one on one with our "littlest." Thank you, Kirsten (again) and Caitlin Seaman, for sharing photographs of the kids' activities. Thank you, Christine and Caitlyn Costello for leading our music. Thank you, parents, for your efforts to get your cherubs to Sunday School regularly. Thank you, members of Zion, for welcoming us as a part of our service each week. Thank you, Pastor Michael for your support and trust throughout the year.

Pentecost Blooms: Christian Folklore of the Dogwood Tree and the Lady's Slippers

By Paula Kilian Clark



For many years in late May, a single pink lady's slipper has bloomed in the same spot along the pathway to Zion's outdoor chapel. I am glad that this little wild orchard appears before the official opening of our outdoor sanctuary. The flower is protected by Massachusetts state law governing wild orchids. One cannot pull up, dig up, transplant, or injure the plant in any way. Once a plant establishes itself in a specific soil area, it takes 10 - 16 years or more to flower! Perhaps it's best not to draw attention to this little beauty.

In several European countries' folk traditions, the lady's slipper is called "Mary's Slipper" or "Our Lady's Slipper." The legend told is that the orchid's blossom is reminiscent in shape to the sandals Mary wore when she traveled from Nazareth to the Judean Hills to visit her older, miraculously pregnant cousin, Elizabeth. It is said that whenever Mary's feet touched the ground, the Lady's Slipper bloomed to mark her steps.

At the head of the opposite pathway, another Pentecost flowering, that of our dogwood tree, simultaneously occurs. The Christian legend around the dogwood tree originated in the southern United States and serves to remind us of Jesus's death on the cross. According to this popular tale, the dogwood was once a very large tree which yielded strong lumber. Therefore, its wood was used to build Christ's crucifixion cross. (For historical and botanical purists, this account requires a willing suspension of disbelief. Dogwood tress did not grow in Jerusalem at this time!) The story continues that God cursed the tree so its branches would be fragile and gnarled, never again usable for a cross. But God also blessed the dogwood

with sweet smelling cross shaped flowers edged with blood stains and indentations that represent the nail holes in Christ's body. At the center of each blossom is a thorny looking crown.

Next Spring, take a moment to sit in our chapel and look with fresh eyes. Thanks be to God for these beautiful parts of His creation that inspire our imaginations and meditations in contemplating His love!



Point Breeze Joint Fellowship Luncheon- June 8th, 2026

On Monday June 8, 2026 our joint lunch at Point Breeze was held, Everyone ordered from the menu and it resulted in a varied assortment of food. Jackie Bonneau made Bible bookmarks for everyone to take home with them. She also provided an assortment of greeting cards to share with everyone. There was lots of talking going on throughout our visit. A group photo was taken by our waiter.







MISSION AND OUTREACH AT RECONCILIATION and Zion

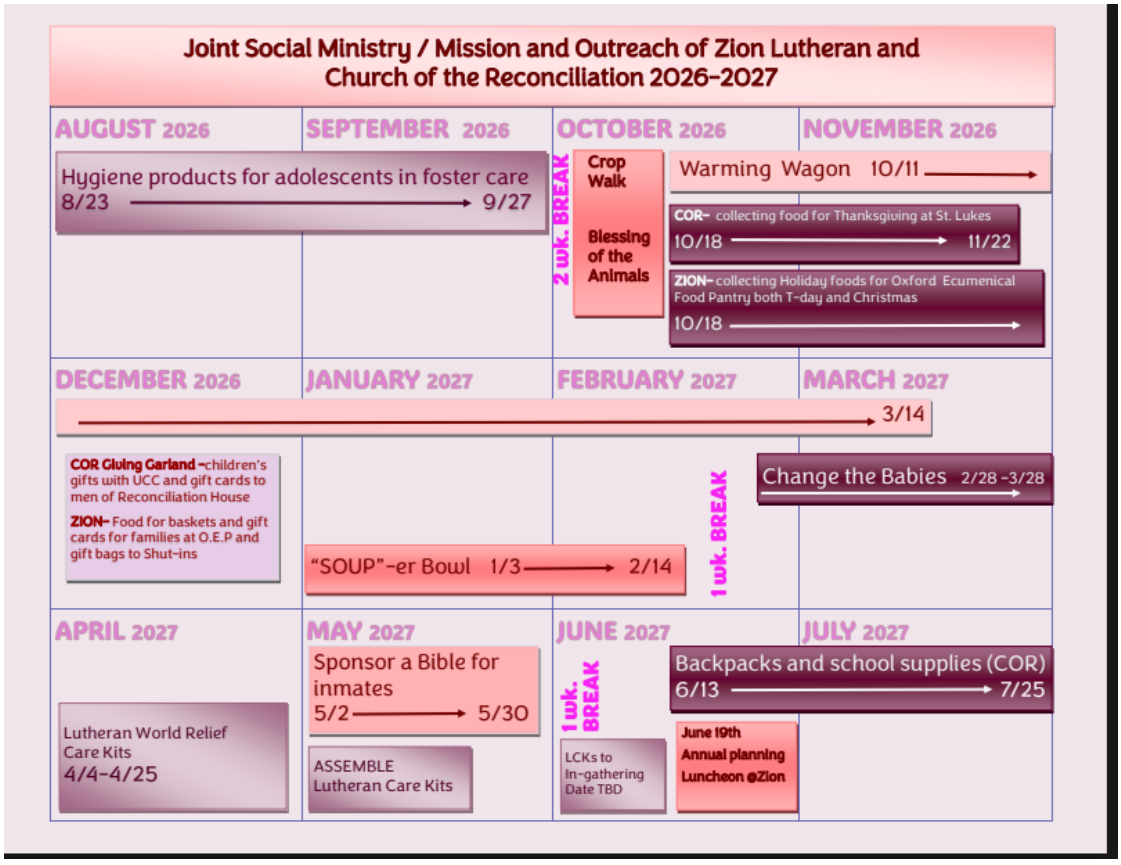
Thank you to everyone at Reconciliation that donated items to our collection for the Lutheran Care Kits. We were able to make 25 kits. A big thank you to Ben Craver for driving the kits to Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Monroe, CT.

We are currently collecting back to school items during the months of June and July to be given out at the Webster Dudley Food Pantry. Bring any donations to the back of the church and leave on the pews. Thank you for your support!




10 QUILTS
7 QUILTS
7 QUILTS

The Joint Annual Mission and Outreach luncheon meeting at Reconciliation on 6/19/26. A pot luck lunch was held with Pastor Michael attending. At the June 19th Mission and Outreach Pot Luck Lunch Pastor Michael wore his German Soccer shirt in honor of the World Cup events he will attend with his sons John and David.









For the last three years the Church of the Reconciliation and Zion Lutheran had a "book in bloom in the Gladys E Kelly Library Bites, Books, and Blooms event. A book in bloom is a floral arrangement that captures a theme, scene—or even the essence—of a novel, poem, short story, or nonfiction literary work. For example, last year, using mainly the herb sage, I captured one of Bishop Charleston's meditations from "Spirit Wheel". It is time for me to hand over the mantle of design to new floral enthusiasts. This year the event will take place on Wednesday September 23rd at the Webster library and it will honor American authors and literature to celebrate America 250. I would like to see a Zion/Reconciliation team come together to do an arrangement. It is a good opportunity to get our message of "Church Better Together" out to the surrounding area.

Do not fear to step forward. There is a workshop on how to do a book in bloom at the library on August 12th. I am available to brainstorm with the team and help with mechanics and other questions. Commitments have to be made by August 3rd. And I hear that the Baptists and Catholics are on board so I am looking for some volunteers. Contact me with questions and to volunteer. My email is cottage267@gmail.com or you can reach me on 508 461 7588. Thank you. Elaine Davies

Afghan Family Update: Written by Cindy Osowski



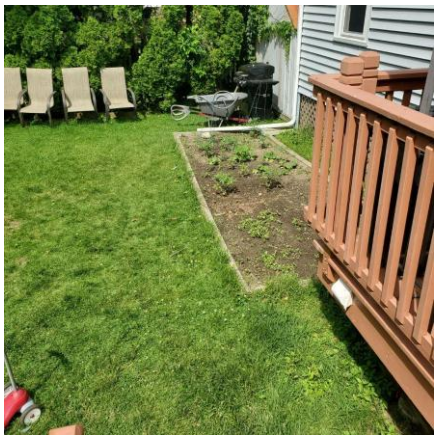
Visiting with our Afghan Resettlement family continues to be interesting. I never know who will be sleeping when I get there at 10:00am each Wednesday! This family of twelve stay up late in the evening in order to face time with their relatives in Afghanistan due to the time difference. Some are up early in the morning in order to get the school age kids off to school and others off to work BUT my ESL student and the toddlers sleep through the morning until I show up at their door!



They are very proud to own their home and are working diligently to improve the fenced in yard. They are excited about the garden they have started.This week we held my "school" outside on their deck where the two year old proudly showed me his "bike" which is actually a scooter. The good news about him is that he is learning everything along with his older brother who is turning four this month. The older one was late to begin to speak so he has been busy catching up and getting ready to go to preschool in the fall. When these photos were taken

the four year old was still in bed so no pictures of him this time.

With help my student was able to read a few stories at her First Grade level which is a big accomplishment due to her lack of schooling in Afghanistan and also here. The family has chosen to keep her home until she marries so we have worked on speaking, reading and writing in English in the time we have together. She also has attended some ESL classes that are provided by the city of Worcester that supplement our time the last four years. One of her brothers just graduated from High School this month. He was not a very diligent student so his future is uncertain.



Sometimes I wonder what my future with this family will be, but so far I enjoy my time with them. Having green tea with them while they ate their 11am breakfast was a good end to my visit this week

Zion Stewardship

With the help of many of you, we were able to fund the new roof. It initially seemed like an insurmountable task to raise the money, but we were able to do it! With your donations (of over $24,000) and the matching funds, we had enough to fund the project. The roof has now been replaced and looks great. I would like to thank all of you who have contributed to the roof replacement fund.



Now that we know what is possible, let's remember that we are in the summer months. Many of us go away on vacation or do some traveling. Please remember to keep up your faithful financial stewardship, even when you are away. Our expenses still go on during the summer

and your regular support is needed.

Thank you to all that freely give of your time, talents, and treasures in support of God's mission here at Zion and at Church of the Reconciliation.

Paul Peterson, Zion Stewardship Chairperson



ZION'S FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Members of Zion's family: Carl Bergeson, Jean Peterson, Shirley Rossmeisl, Lois Bernier, Carol Langer, Karen, Tere, Priscilla

Siemienkiewicz, Chris, David Bernier, Arthur Siegmund, Janet Abissi, Dave Olson, Pam Olson, Heide Smith, David Clifford.

Home-bound members: Karen Johnson, Barbara Munsch

Friends or family members: David Orisini, Malayna White, David S., Gail, Rick, Cade Dumas, Julie D., Thomas Lortie, Trinity W., Richard Orisini, Sam, Jo-Ann, Cathy, Paula J., Reese Mariano, Carol L. Linda B., Stephen Vogel, Richard Joubert, Karen Peterson, Katy, Roger Desaulniers, Chris, Maria and Michael Gurriere, Violet Strawderman, The Santos Family, Beshoy.

THE CHURCH OF THE RECONCILIATION'S FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Wanda, Claudette, Judy, Don, Tiffany K., Olivia, Michelle L., the Giro family, Loretta, Bruce, Connie, Maryjoe, Mary Alice, Baby Miller, James and his family, Beth A., Beverly, Diana, Paul, Carole and Corey Reilly, Fitzgerald Sampson, Allison Sampson, Nancy, David Thomas, John K. and David W.

July and August Birthdays

Zion: July: Michele Pavlis 14, Ann Bacon 22, Arthur Siegmund 24 Brenda Lukasek 31
AUGUST: Kristen Larson 01, Cooper James Szlyk 04, Barbara Steege 07, Jay Costello 09 ,Priscilla Siemienkiewicz 10, Margaret Heide 12 David Olson 16, Dave Peterson 20, Keith Cheever 31

Church of the Reconciliation: July: 3 Arthur Mansfield 5 Catherine Przybylek, 7 Cheryl Shays 14 Loretta Dennehy, 28 Angelique Monti (Adult daughter of Vivian Nurse)

August: 16: Ryan Crosby (teen son of Karen Crosby) 25: Peter McNamara

Veteran's Luncheon Provided by Building Bridges



Wednesday of every month
NEXT DATE: July 15th at NOON
August 19th at NOON

At Church of the Reconciliation 21 N. Main Street, Webster, MA 01570

This is an opportunity for a complimentary meal and camaraderie with your fellow brothers and sisters.

Any questions please feel free to contact:
Kevin E. Paicos Cpt., Inf. (Special Forces), Ret.
Mark C. Rogers - mcrogers53@gmail.com