

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



Photo courtesy of Louisa Klaven

Joint Newsletter- September 2026

What Bible Translation Should I Use? And what do I use the Bible for?

People often ask me, “What Bible translation should I use?” My answer comes down to personal preference. At a very basic level, translations like *The Message*, *The Living Bible* (TLB), and the *New Living Translation* (NLT) are more paraphrased. On the other end, translations like the *Revised Standard Version* (RSV) are typically more word-for-word. Many of you reading this page have loved the King James Bible for the beautiful language.

I personally like to use a variety of translations. I regularly use the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV Bible) and the New International Version (NIV). I also enjoy reading older German translations of Martin Luther whose translation of the Bible into the German language was a powerful and empowering tool for those who could not read or understand Latin.

I recently met with colleagues, and we discussed our own use of the Bible & what our parishioners are telling us about their engagement with the Bible. Some shared that they have been surprised by how many people come to ask them what the Bible says about this romantic predicament or that job offer. Some people want to know if they should let the Bible fall open at will or close their eyes and point to a passage for the answer to their questions about mortgages, travel, commitments, etc.

The motives of these people are entirely honorable. They are seeking the will of God for their lives, but what surprised my fellow clergy and me is their willingness to put the answers they find in the Bible on a pedestal above the answers they find in their own minds and hearts, in the counsel of their friends, and in the world around them. The Bible is not an oracle or a “how to” book, but a collection of stories that reflect God’s love in our lives.

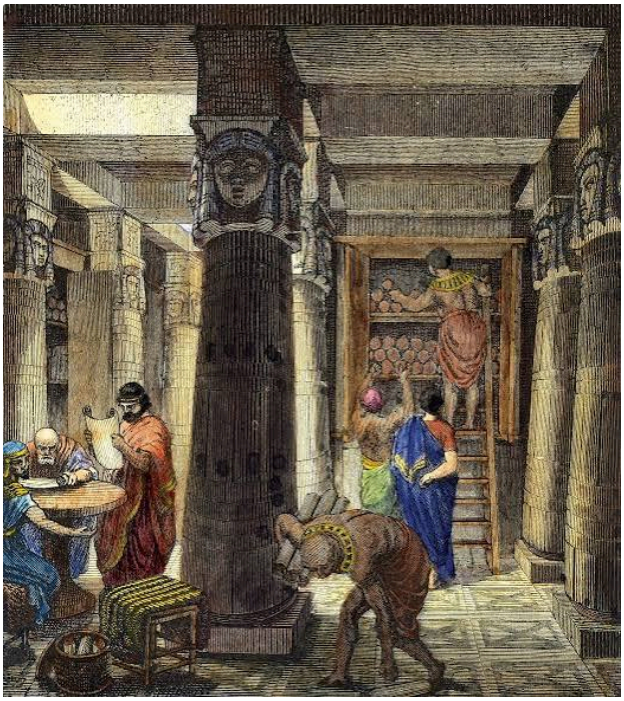
In addition to lots of laws, a few genealogies and some sound advice, what the Bible contains are many biographies. Abraham and Sarah, Hosea and Habakkuk, John the Baptist, Mary and Joseph, Peter and Mary Magdalene, Paul, the Apostle. It contains the stories of all their relationships with God and the particular things God had to say to each of them, how God loved each of them.

What all those stories tell us is that God’s word, God’s will for their lives, did not come to them in a printed manual, with specific answers to be found on page 416. God’s will for them, which was God’s love for them, came in the form of a living relationship that they were free to embrace or flee. Reading about their relationships cannot be a substitute for seeking our own. We are called to live out our own stories, to search for the unique shape our own lives will take in communion with God and find God’s particular word of love to us.

In Christ, Pr. Michael

Admin's Corner

Ah September! One of my favorite months. The beginning of Autumn, colored leaves, falling temperatures, Apple and Pumpkin desserts everywhere and roaring fireplaces with sweaters and blankets. September isn't just my favorite month because it begins Autumn, it is also because it honors my previous profession.September, if you didn't already know, is National Library Card Sign Up Month. I'd imagine, even in Biblical times, that there was that something that resembled today's library and that Christ would have used it.



The Library Alexandria, also known as The Great Library comes to mind as the library Christ may have used, if he had been alive in the right time period. Housed in Egypt, established during the reign of Ptolemy II Philadelphus, the Pharaoh of the time. It housed many great scrolls from Homeric poems to laws and contained as many as 70,000 scrolls at the highest point in its history. Sadly, the library was burned to the ground by Julius Caesar accidentally during his war in 48 BC.

However, any modern day Christian can walk into their local library and request any book they wish! I have several favorite Christian fiction series I would recommend for reading anytime, but particularly during Autumn.

- The Mitford Years Series by Jan Karon

Following Episocal Priest Tom Kavanaugh and his adventures in the town of Mitford, it's a cozy series that is perfect for any time of the year.

- Amy Clipston- everything she's written

Amy Clipston has a talent for Amish Fiction, and whatever she writes, whether it be Amish or contemporary I am hooked But her Amish Market Place Collection is particularly delectable for Autumn.

- The Divine Proverbs of Strusel by Sara Brunsvold

Cooking her way through her great-grandmother's German recipes provides Nikki Werner an anchor in the storm of family crisis. But will it be enough to fill every hunger she has?

- C.S Lewis and J.R.R Tolken

I'd be remiss (and a terrible Librarian/English Major) if I didn't mention this dynamic duo. Lewis' *Narnia Chronicles* is great for Kids and Adults alike, while the deeply Spiritual *Screwtape Letters* and *Mere Christianity* make great Book Group Material. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* takes a deep dive into fantasy with Christianity buried in the pages.Honorale mentions go to:

- *The Red Tent by Anita Diamant*
- *Pilgrims Progress by John Bunyan*

Happy Reading,

Admin Maria

Coming Up: At Zion and Reconciliation

OXFORD ECUMENICAL FOOD SHELF COLLECTION
Donations Needed



Recently, Zion received a thank you letter from St. Pauly Textile Inc 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.

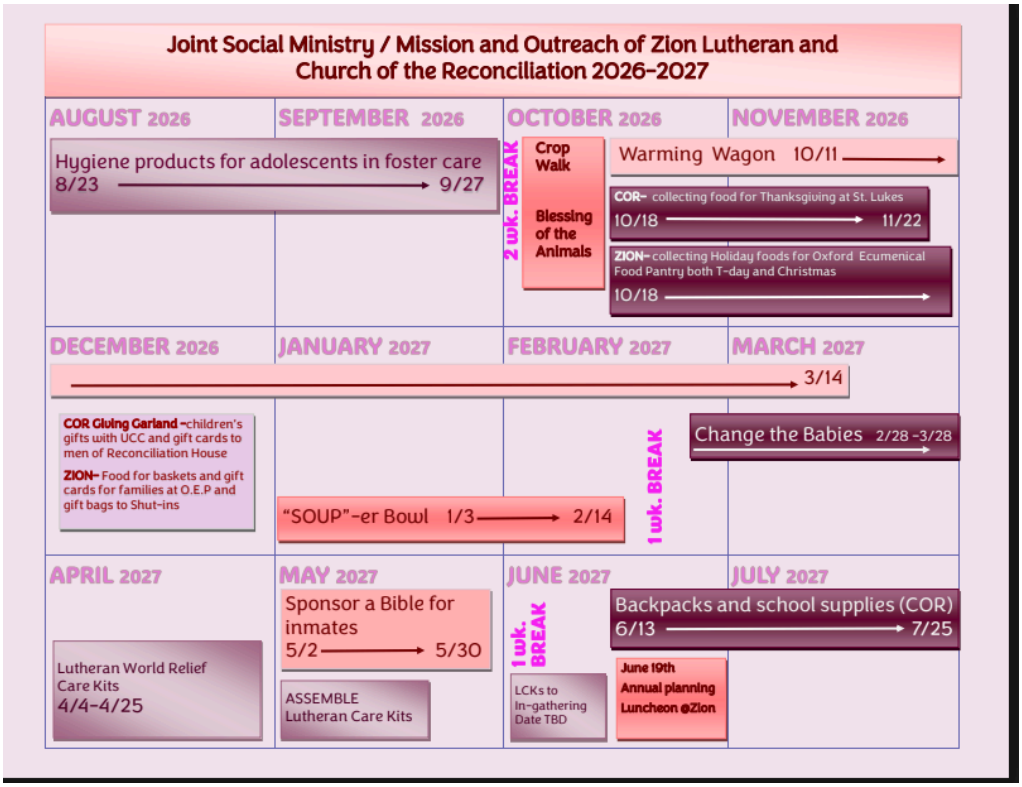
The Next Fellowship Luncheon Will be held at Point Breeze on September 14, 2026 at Noon. All are welcome.



JOINT SERVICE AND END OF SUMMER GATHERING

Mark your calendars for September 20th! It's our next joint service with the Church of the Reconciliation and Zion Lutheran Church. We're planning to get together in fellowship to celebrate the end of summer (fall officially kicks off on September 22nd) at Sheri and Mark Rogers' place by Webster Lake. We'll kick things off with a service outside at 10:00 AM and

Enjoy fellowship afterwards. We're doing a potluck, so please bring your favorite dish! The churches will provide non-alcoholic beverages. The weather will decide what we do, but if it gets too rainy, we'll have to move everything to Reconciliation and Fellowship Hall. So, please plan your day around this. It's a great opportunity to celebrate "Church Better Together" for almost six years and just have some fun. We'll share more details soon.



Mission and Outreach by Karen Crosby

In September we will be collecting items for teens in the foster care system. Many times when teens are pulled from their home, they only have a few minutes to grab their stuff and items get forgotten. We are hoping to collect the following items for the system to distribute to the teens as needed. Any help you can give will be greatly appreciated. The items we are collecting are: * Deodorant * Body Wash/Soap * Feminine Care (pads) * Shampoo and Conditioner (Afro-American brands too!) * Toothbrushes and Toothpaste * Lotion * Sunscreen * Phone Chargers.

October 18th will be the **Annual Crop Walk** here in Oxford! Save the date and plan to walk with Addison Blais and her team!

ZION SUNDAY SCHOOL SNIPPETS

Submitted by Paula Kilian Clark

Pastor Michael offered a blessing of the backpacks and a blessing for all children and teachers returning to classes this autumn. The congregation sends our prayers for stimulating learning, good health, new friendships and satisfying curiosity as the new year begins. The children know that Jesus is in their backpacks!







LET THE CHILDREN COME TO ME…Matthew 19:14

Sunday School begins a new year on September 27, 2026 at 8:45 AM. Our little family is growing and we will be happy to welcome all children who want to learn about God and grow in His ways. Parents, grandparents, and caregivers are welcome to accompany their students.

Our class is a multi-age group of thirteen much loved young people who listen to Bible stories and create thematic arts and crafts during the sermon under the guidance of three teachers and an assistant. We return for Communion or a blessing, then Pastor Michael offers a special “Children’s Moment.” The children share their learning with their families and the congregation. We want our “”kids” to know that they belong to and have a place in our larger church community.

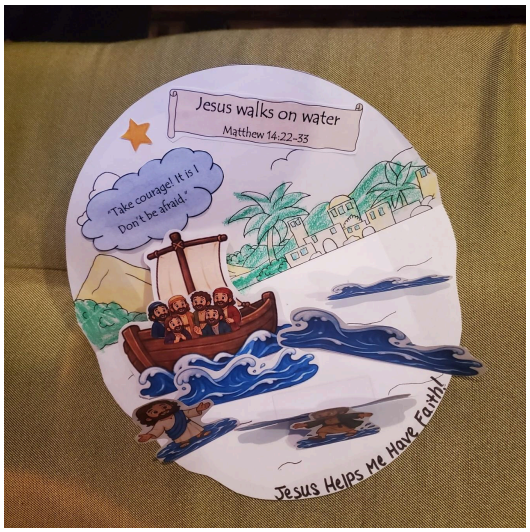
Erika Blais offers toddler time for children not quite ready for formal Sunday School in the Koinonia Room each week that Sunday School meets.

We look forward to seeing you soon! If you have questions or concerns, contact Paula Clark.

Sunday School Snippets:

Church of the Reconciliation

Submitted by Cindy Osowski



At Church of the Reconciliation in August the actual class was held in the same room as the Coffee Hour. The Sunday School room upstairs in the Parish Hall would have been too hot for everyone. The craft was about Jesus walking on the water and it was quite colorful thanks to Rosealina and the boys who colored them! They returned to worship in time to say the Lord's Prayer with all of us.





Great news! We've got a new boiler installed at Reconciliation's Fellowship Hall

Thanks to a successful fundraising effort and a kind donation from the Malser Family Trust, Church of the Reconciliation teamed up with JV Mechanical to replace our old boiler, which was over 40 years old. The work wrapped up in late August, just in time to deal with cooling weather. This upgrade is a win for everyone, not just our parishioners. The Fellowship Hall is a vital community hub, used every day. Its home to the Early Risers AA meeting (a staple for over 25 years), a women's recovery group, Alanon, Narcotics Anonymous, and the Building Bridges Veterans Lunch. Plus, it's the heart of the Reconciliation family's social life. We're so thankful to God for making this happen and giving Church of the Reconciliation the chance to serve Him by helping our community. (Submitted by Mark Rogers)



The **July Joint Service** was held at Reconciliation followed by an Ice Cream Social that was sponsored by the Reconciliation Mission and Outreach Group. Many hands were enlisted in order to make this outdoor event a success. Especially helpful were two Pop



up tents to create shade for the attendees as well as the actual ice cream. The tents were loaned by the Crosby and Sage families.Scoopers were: Karen Crosby, Mark Rogers and Tiffany Poplawski. The weather was perfect for this service and our fellowship.

Thank you, Abissi Family, for Zion's Sign of Faith



Janet Abissi, Zion Lutheran Church's oldest member at 93 years of age, is a vivacious soul who is deeply rooted in her Christian faith. When she notices that something needs to be done in our building or for one of our ministries, Janet always gives back to the church she loves. She shared that her mother and father were "always at church doing one project or another" and she carries on that tradition. She also related that her late husband Frank "loved our church because he found our members to be so friendly and welcoming." Janet sang in Zion's choir for years and shared a delightful memory of Frank passing by the choir after Communion and giving her a wink. The choir loved those winks, too!



When it became apparent that Zion's roadside church sign, built by Bay Path more than thirty years ago, was looking shabby, this nonagenarian conceived of a plan to give "glory to God" and to honor Frank's memory. After planning meetings and family conversations, the Abissi family decided to donate a new

sign to create a lasting invitation to members, visitors and passersby along the busy highway.

Janet, Frank Jr and Leana, Carl and Cathy, Kim and Bob, Mark and Maria made this dream a reality. The gift that welcomes all was dedicated by Pastor Michael on Sunday, June 21st. Our thankful congregation celebrated after the dedication with beautifully decorated cake for coffee hour. (Paula Clark)

Book in Bloom- Elaine Davies

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 Wed. 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 at (508) 461-7588. Thank you.
Elaine Davies

Teresa’s Stitches of Love

By Paula Kilian Clark
For the last year, Teresa Laurens has been at her sewing machine in Woodstock, Connecticut, creating dresses for little girls she will never know and who will never know Teresa. The dresses are made



in sizes 4, 6, and 8 and, remarkably, not by using a pattern. Tere uses measurements only, as this is the method she learned as a child.

This talented seamstress is part of Interfaith Stitchers, located at Westfield Church in Danielson, Connecticut. Tere learned about this mission from another Golden Bee who volunteers with her at United Congregational Church's sleeping bag ministry.

Teresa, one of nine children, grew up in Mexico. Her mother, Sofia, taught her to sew at the age of seven. Along with her sister, Tere was given a large piece of white cloth to make a skirt. Sofia, keeping a close eye on her daughters, scolded Theresa because she sewed too fast. Tere recalls that her sister's skirt was perfect, but hers "was a disaster."

When Teresa married Bob Laurens, all she wished for was a sewing machine, but the cost was too much for the newlyweds' budget. One morning Bob heard of a used machine on WESO's Cracker Barrel radio show, the precursor to today's on line marketplaces. Tere applauds her husband "for making her dream come true" because his offer was accepted.

Tere went on to do alterations, create wedding gowns, baptismal dresses, and some upholstering. Whatever her customers needed, she "would figure it out." Old Sturbridge Village hired Teresa as a seamstress which was challenging work. All the clothing worn by the docents is historically correct. No zippers, snaps or fasteners of any kind, except buttons, can be used for the hats, aprons, and costumes.

Most of the striking liturgical seasonal banners at Zion Lutheran Church have been designed and sewn by Teresa. Of all the liturgical seasonal banners, her favorite, the head of Christ with a crown of thorns, is displayed during Lent. She has patiently taught many of us how to work on these pieces.

Throughout her career, Teresa never forgot how "poor children in Mexico suffered and didn't have clothes." She wanted to give joy to these children. And she certainly did! She has sewn 60 dresses so far this year! This is how she describes her creative process that blesses little girls: "my mind goes into another galaxy and I can picture the child's face, her hands in the pockets of a full skirt, as her parents stand there smiling." As you can see in the picture below, the dresses are beautifully embellished with buttons, lace, and piping. She doesn't plan each dress ahead of time, she says "the donated material talks to her." Certainly, each young recipient feels very special in these one of a kind garments.

Tere asked that credit be given to her husband, Bob, for securing "the best bargain" on her sewing machine and taking care of their children and kitchen so she could sew during the daylight and finish her commitments. If you would like to help in this ministry, you can share material, lace, buttons, zippers with Tere. It will be fun to see which galaxy this generous, talented woman travels to with your gifts.



Afghan Family Update

Again I was thinking about stopping regular visits to the Alizai house and we had a wonderful outside class with six of the children attending! When school starts in a few weeks all but two will be going to the Worcester schools so I will enjoy my time with them during August and in September I will be reevaluating the situation with Noorzia. She attends a class for adult ESL learners twice a week that is provided by the city of Worcester so doesn't really need my help. Their culture is keeping her at home until she might marry someday in the future. (Submitted by Cindy Osowski)





Zion Stewardship

I am impressed with the many stewards among us that volunteer their time, talents and treasure. to carry on our mission here. Thank you all for your work.

I would like to offer a few of personal stewardship thank-you's

- The worship volunteers, who do the readings, worship assistants, ushers, worship organizers and associated activities

- Altar support workers
- Sunday school and youth workers and helpers
- Property helpers
- Coffee hour workers
- Church council participants

Without your efforts we could not be successful. A very big thank you to all that have contributed to the roof replacement fund. Your help made this possible. The new roof has been well tested the past weeks by rain and wind and has performed well. Thank goodness that we got this done, Please remember to keep up your faithful financial stewardship. When you are away, our expenses still go and your regular support is needed.
Thanks to all of you that freely give of your time, talents, and treasures in support of God's mission here at Zion and at the Church of the Reconciliation.

Paul Peterson, Zion Stewardship Chairperson

In Memoriam

The Following donations were made in memory of the following:

- In Memory of Barbara Munsch to the Memorial fund from Carol Weinhardt, Paul and Jean and Peterson and Sue Schade, and from the Sitkowski, Malboeuf and Hickey Funeral Home
- In Memory of Ormond Schade Donation to the Building fund from Sue Schade



ZION'S FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Members of Zion's family: Jean Peterson, Shirley Rossmeisl, Lois Bernier, Carol Langer, Karen, Priscilla Siemienkiewicz, Chris, David Bernier, Arthur Siegmund, Janet Abissi, Dave Olson, Heide Smith, David Clifford.

Home-bound members: Karen Johnson

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, Louise S., Violet Strawderman, The Santos Family.

THE CHURCH OF THE RECONCILIATION'S FAMILY AND FRIENDS

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

September Birthdays

Zion: Jeffrey Clark 09, Chris Costello 13, Myles Higgins 18, Erika Blais 20 Steve Schur 23, Haylee Olson 24, Tere Laurens 25, Richard Clark 25. Marleen Bacon 29

Church of the Reconciliation: Sandie VanSickle 25

Veteran’s Luncheon Provided by Building Bridges



3rd Wednesday of every month
NEXT DATE: September 16th 2026

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:
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Mark C. Rogers - mcrogers53@gmail.com