

January 2026

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**MT. ZION**

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**MONTHLY**

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### **From the Pastor's Heart**

Dear Mt. Zion Family,

As most of you are aware this year hasn't started out the way myself and my family had it planned. My wife came down with flu-like symptoms on New Years Eve and I was hit with it a couple days later. We are both feeling much better and we thank you all for your prayers during that time. I truly appreciate your understanding of the delay in this letter going out this month.

A new year always brings a quiet invitation. It invites us to pause, breathe, and look both backward and forward with honesty and hope. As I reflect on the year we have just completed, I am grateful for the ways God has carried us, shaped us, and held us together as a church family. We have walked through joys and challenges, and through it all God has remained faithful.

Now we step into January with fresh expectations. The turning of the calendar is not magic, but it is meaningful. It reminds us that God is always doing something new. Scripture tells us that those who are in Christ are a new creation. That promise is not tied to a date on the calendar. It is tied to the ongoing work of God in our lives. Even so, the start of a new year gives us a chance to open our hearts again to that renewing grace.

On Christmas Eve I offered a simple invitation to those who were worshiping with us for the first time or returning after some time away. I want you to know that this invitation extends to every person who calls Mt. Zion home. I am asking you to give me a year. Give God a year. Dedicate yourself to worship, to Bible study, to children's Sunday School, to outreach, or to whatever place God is calling and leading you in this season. Show up with intention and openness, and let us see together what God has in store for us. I believe that if we commit ourselves to this journey, God will grow our faith in ways we cannot yet imagine and will strengthen us as a church for the work ahead.

### **January Focus**

This month we will lean into the theme of renewal. Renewal of faith. Renewal of community. Renewal of our commitment to follow Christ with courage and compassion. Worship throughout January will help us explore what it means to begin again with God, not only once a year but every day.

### **New Year Bible Study**

I am excited to share that our New Year Bible Study begins on **Wednesday, January 14 at 6:30 PM**. This will be a wonderful opportunity to grow together, ask questions, and deepen our understanding of Scripture. Whether you are new to Bible study or have been part of many, you are welcome. Bring your curiosity, your hopes for the year ahead, and your desire to grow in faith. We will learn from the Word and from one another.

## Looking Ahead

As we move through January, let us stay open to the ways God may surprise us. Let us look for moments of grace in ordinary days. Let us encourage one another and continue building a church where people feel seen, welcomed, and loved. Mt. Zion is a place where God is at work, and I believe this year will bring new opportunities for ministry, connection, and transformation.

Thank you for the privilege of being your pastor. I am grateful for each of you, and I look forward to walking into this new year together with hope.

With gratitude and joy,  
Pastor Shawn

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## UPPER ROOM

The January/February Issue of the Upper Room (which we encourage you to read) is dedicated to The Glory of God and in Memory of Our Parents and Grand Parents and In Honor of our Children and Spouses, Charles & Cyndy, Lois and Chris and Charlene and Robb. Also, in Honor of our Grand Children, Ameilia, Andrew, Ryan, Katy, Gabbi and Emma. By Charles (Dad/Pop) and Inez (Mom/Nan/Grandma) Beckhardt.

**END OF YEAR STATEMENTS:** Will be sent out via email this year for those that have an email in our system. You can simply print them for your use as needed. If you need a paper copy sent to you let Mark know asap. 410-299-7517 or mark.hemler428@gmail.com

**Did you know that most people attend because they were personally invited?**

Our January **COMMUNITY SERVICE FUND** 1<sup>ST</sup> Sunday received \$305. We are grateful for those who support this important fund especially at this time of the year.

**A CALL FOR COATS** Although the date has passed you can still donate new winter coats. By appointment only 410-857-5944. Coats can be purchased locally or from our Amazon Wishlist [amzn.to/318LTYI](https://www.amazon.com/wishlist/ref=wl_cr_text). Winter is here. Can you help someone?

**NEW CHILDREN'S PAJAMAS** for kids hospitalized with cancer. You can still donate. It is still winter. Pajamas will be donated to Josh's Jammies a non-profit organization. Donations go to children hospitalized at Sinai Hospital, Mt. Washington Pediatric Hospital, and University of Maryland Hospital NICU and PICU units. Important: give pajamas to Barbara Hayes

*Happy New Year 2026!*