

**Contact Information**

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Facebook—[Zion Lutheran Church ELCA](#)

Website—[www.zionithaca.org](http://www.zionithaca.org)

Log in information and the worship bulletin for each Sunday can be found on our website on the “Worship in the Pandemic” page

**Helpers for July**

Cleaners—Gary and Michelle Otto

Lectors—Rine

Ushers—Merlin Fick/Gary Otto

Communion will be “self-serve”

Zion Lutheran Church  
589 County Rd. 13  
Ithaca, NE 68033

**Encounter Christ...Grow in faith...Love as Christ loved...Tell the Story**

***Return to In-Person Worship***

Both church councils and I have met several times over the last 14 weeks. We have looked at recommendations from doctors and scientists locally and at the national level, the ELCA, and Church Mutual, our insurance carrier. We decided we wanted to see two steady weeks of declining new cases of Covid 19 before we even considered in person worship. Based on that criteria, we’ve tentatively planned to resume in person worship on July 5. I say tentatively, because recently, cases in some places have started climbing again. We will watch closely over the next week and a half and if it seems not safe, we will continue to hold off.

I am anxious to gather again—I have missed seeing people—whole people and not just heads inside a little video box, or as a blank box with a phone number. Yet there is a certain amount of trepidation about restarting. We are by far not the first to reopen, but there are congregations that aren’t even considering it until August or even later. Church congregations have a high number of higher risk people, and I want to be as careful as we can. Detailed guidelines we will follow are on page 2 of this newsletter.

I am so very grateful for those of you have stayed connected in some way—through Zoom, either online or by phone, or by calls, written notes, reading mailed materials, and by watching out for each other. For those who haven’t connected in a more visible way, I hope you’ve been able to at least watch some of the recorded worship services or meditations. I don’t have a way of knowing who was able to do that. The majority of us have done an amazing job maintaining some sense of community during all this. I’m grateful for that and I also believe it will have made us a stronger community as we go into a new future.

As we do resume, I do want us to think about what we’ve learned that can help us going into that future. Offering an online option is something we will likely continue indefinitely, for both worship and education opportunities. It has been a way to reach people we ordinarily wouldn’t, and it’s been a nice option for regular attendees who might want an unrushed Sunday but still want to worship...although I hope you’ll mostly still come!

It has been a long haul. It’s a surprising amount of work to manage the online and offline connections and maintain that community. Preaching during all the things that have happened has been the biggest challenge of my career. But we worship a God who promises to walk with us through our times of struggle and turmoil. And that God creates new things and brings to life that which is dead. It is in that we place our hope for whatever comes next.

Christ’s peace,

*Pastor Kris*

## Reopening Guidelines

All are welcome to come – use your own judgement of your risk factors or those of people you are in contact with in deciding when and how to return to in person worship

### Do not come if any of the following are true

You have a fever, cough, sore throat, loss of taste/smell, severe unexplained muscle aches. If you're not feeling well in some way, it's better to err on the side of staying home

You have reason to believe you may have been exposed, even if you have no symptoms.

### Entering and Leaving

Households will need to maintain 6 feet distance

Ushers will escort households into the building and to their seat

We will dismiss by household

Do not congregate in the narthex – once outside, you can visit with others but please maintain 6 feet of distance

Use hand sanitizer as you go in

### Seating

We will block off every other pew – someone will need to sit in the front pew

As much as possible, we will seat people at the opposite end of whoever is seated in the pew in front and behind you – a zigzag pattern

One household per pew

If we are unable to seat everyone in the sanctuary, we hope to have Zoom set up on the TV in the basement.

### Masks

Masks should be worn – if you have your own, you can wear it but we will also have masks available

### Worship

There will be no congregational singing for now

Communion will be by individual pre-packaged juice and wafers. These will be on a table in the narthex. Please pick one up as you go in, without touching any of the others

We will not use hymnals. Bulletins will be set on seating spots in pews. All of the service will be printed. Please take your bulletin home and dispose of it there

Exchange of peace will be no-touch

Ideally, offering should continue by mail or online, but we will have plates available. Please make sure you've used hand sanitizer before placing your offering

Zoom worship will continue for the foreseeable future in addition to in person worship

### Restrooms

We will clean and sanitize after worship, but worship will largely be less than 45 minutes. If at all possible, avoid using the restroom

### Kitchen will not be used

Church offerings can continue to be mailed to:

Aaron Nygren

927 County Rd. 17

Wahoo, NE 68066

You can also donate through tithe.ly. You can do it online here: [tithe.ly](https://tithe.ly)

Or on a tablet or smart phone, download the tithe.ly app and search for Zion Lutheran church in Ithaca.



Here is the log in information for worship **beginning Sunday July 5** at 9:00 am. Note that we will return to our normal worship time of 9:00 am on July 5.

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83561317138?pwd=R3g1M0hyNlZkZzhQMw8wbn10MG9lZz09>

Phone—1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 835 6131 7138

Password: 642375

Log in for Bethlehem/Zion worship **June 28 at 10 am** will be the same as it has been.:

Link - <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85726164712?pwd=ZHZpTktkZjUjZkNjRsNUVNai9JUT09>

Phone number - 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 857 2616 4712

Password: 153512

## Calendar

June 28	10:00 am—Bethlehem/Zion Zoom worship
June 30	6:30 pm—Women’s Group, Janna’s—330 Pleasant, Greenwood
July 5	9:00 am—Worship at Zion or via Zoom. Holy Communion
July 12	9:00 am—Worship at Zion or via Zoom
July 19	9:00 am—Worship at Zion or via Zoom 11:15 am—“Drive up” communion at <b>Bethlehem</b> . I’ll be outside in front of the church to offer communion for those who want to receive communion but aren’t yet comfortable gathering inside. Protective health measures will be practiced. I will also be contacting some folks for possible home communion if that would be better for you.
July 26	9:00 am—Worship at Zion or via Zoom

I will be on vacation July 20 - Sunday July 26. The Cornhusker State Games triathlon, which was my original reason for doing so has been cancelled. But if I only take vacation this year when scheduled events actually happen, there will probably be no vacation, and that’s not healthy.

I’ll be around for the most part, so will still be available for emergencies, but will need someone to lead worship and share the message. There are several recorded options from the synod, and there’s some possibility of

getting a sub, but I like giving others in the congregation a chance to share some of their faith experiences. Let me know if you are interested in sharing the message that day.



## Midweek Reflection



This picture is the third batch of peas from my garden. They’re slowing down, but this has definitely been my most successful pea-raising year ever. Most of the time, the rabbits have eaten them as soon as there are enough leaves to actually feed a rabbit.

This year, we practiced aggressive fencing to distance the rabbits from my peas. The first fence we put up was plastic. When the rabbits ate through that, we put chicken wire and assorted blockades around the area. That seemed to stave off the rabbit attacks on my peas and my brussels sprouts. (cont. on reverse)

With these midweek reflections, I’ve not put a lot of thought into what I want to talk about—I either pick a picture from my visual faith pack that for some reason jumps out at me, or I go with some other image that pops in my head. Then I work from there to make faith connections. My peas have been on my mind because now I actually have to shell them and deal with them.

So, you ask, what kind of faith connection could there possibly be here? The obvious one is God’s creation. But I’m going to go a different direction.

Let’s use peas as a metaphor for God’s people. Now, metaphors are always imperfect, and I realize rabbits are God’s creatures, too, and not in fact evil. But we’re going to use them as an image of evil. Keeping rabbits, a force of death and destruction, out of my pea patch allows God’s amazing creation to grow and flourish.

Here’s our scripture for this week, from Psalm 17:

Guard me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings,  
<sup>9</sup> from the wicked who despoil me, my deadly enemies who surround me.

<sup>10</sup> They close their hearts to pity; with their mouths they speak arrogantly.

<sup>11</sup> They track me down; now they surround me; they set their eyes to cast me to the ground.

<sup>12</sup> They are like a lion eager to tear, like a young lion lurking in ambush.

I meet weekly with a group of pastors for Bible study and mutual support. Yesterday we talked about how much more we’ve been digging into theology as we’ve tried to preach through all this craziness. And of course the biggest theological question of all is the problem of evil and suffering.

What is God doing in the midst of a pandemic, racial injustice and unrest, economic crises, and political turmoil? Is God doing anything about all this? And what is our call?

The clue lies in creation and new creation. In creation, God brought all the universe and its amazing life out of an infinitely small and dense pinpoint of potential and tamed the chaos of that first explosion to make the universe we see.

On the cross, infinite evil put Jesus to death. But God brought him back to life. The forces of evil and chaos are powerful. It can even look like they’re going to win. But God’s promise in the cross and resurrection is that they will not.

Ultimately, God will defeat evil, not us. But God depends on us to participate in that work. If the rabbits represent the demonic forces, the forces of evil, our work is to help fight those forces. Now, as I said Sunday, the demonic isn’t some person or group of people. It is in all of us but it’s also bigger than any person or group of people.

Depending on the demon, there are concrete things we can do. But the single most unique power we have is the power of prayer. I realize I might be sounding repetitious, but prayer is the fence that can help keep evil at bay, so God can do God’s work to make creation grow and flourish. Pray against the forces that bring death and suffering to God’s people...especially the most vulnerable of God’s people.