

## History and Meaning about the Advent Wreath

This year you will notice that Zion will have deep blue candles in the Advent wreath. Over the years I have been asked different things about the Advent wreath: Why blue or purple candles? What happened to one candle being pink/rose? Didn't they all have a special name? Over the centuries there have been many different traditions and customs regarding the Advent wreath.

"The Advent wreath has its roots in the pre-Christian practices of northern Europe. People sought the return of the sun in the dark time of the year (at the winter solstice) by lighting candles and fires. As early as the Middle Ages, Christians used fire and light to represent Christ's coming into the world. Using this same symbolism, the Advent wreath developed a few centuries ago in Germany as a sign of the waiting and hopeful expectation of the return in glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. The wreath, a circle, came to represent the eternal victory over death through Jesus Christ. The evergreens were a sign of the faithfulness of God to God's people, even in death, and the lit candles were a reminder of the light of Christ brought into the world.

This symbolism can be just as strong for us today. As is the case with all symbols, they speak most loudly to remind us of God's promises of life when they are drawn directly out of our daily experience and environment."<sup>1</sup>

There is no one prescribed color for the candles. Currently, our denomination uses four dark blue candles which match the blue used for the season of Advent, a color representing hope. As we wait we are filled with anticipation and hope much like those who waited for the Messiah so long ago.

Some congregations adhere to the older tradition of using purple candles. That was the color when I was a child. Both Advent and Lent then have the same color and it represents a more penitential (repentant) season like we observe now in Lent. The three purple candles also have a pink/rose candle for the third Sunday in Advent. This was lit on the third Sunday called Gaudete Sunday, meaning "Rejoice!" The assembly celebrated being half-way through the season of Advent and it has its roots in Philippians 4:4-6, "rejoice in the Lord always..."

"Liturgical renewal in the last decades of this century has shifted the focus of these four weeks to one of hope and expectation of the coming of the Christ. This hope looks forward not only to celebrating the child in the manger, but even more to Christ's coming in glory at the end of time."<sup>1</sup>

As far as the names of the candles go, my research reveals that the names are symbolic. In our tradition we don't claim these specific names for the candles, yet they certainly fit with the themes and scriptures of Advent and Christmas. The first is the Prophet's candle symbolizing hope. The second is Bethlehem's candle symbolizing faith. The third is the Shepherd's candle symbolizing joy. The fourth is the Angel's candle symbolizing peace.

The center candle is white, and it represents Jesus Christ as the light that has come into the world and expelled the darkness. We light this candle on Christmas Eve along with all our individual candles when we read the birth narrative in the Gospel of Luke.

Christian symbols deepen our experiences and add meaning to our faith. As you gaze upon the candles of this wreath at home or at church, may you be filled with hope and joy waiting to celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ, and his return.

<sup>1</sup>elca.org resource, "What is the Advent Wreath and How is it used in worship?"

Advent and Christmas blessings,  
Pastor Elizabeth Martin

## **Community Meal**



Hot soup and crispy grilled cheese sandwiches are a perfect meal for a chilly fall day. The 75 guests at the November Community Meal consumed about 120 bowls of soup and 110 grilled cheese sandwiches. Chicken noodle, cheesy broccoli and tomato soup were all served. Also, through a generous donation from a local distributor we were also able to serve nine apple pies for dessert.

Thank you to the very busy group of volunteers who made this meal possible: Marge, Linda, Marilee, Dawn, Judy, Sharon, JoAnne, Terry, Larry, Delaney and Kathy.

A representative from the local U of Illinois Extension Office was on hand at the meal to provide information about SNAP-ed. We hope that those in need will find some relief in learning about and getting involved in the SNAP-ed program.

The next Community Meal is December 13th. If you'd like to volunteer, for planning purposes it is very helpful if you sign up on the sheet posted on the bulletin board.

John Enright

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## **Food Truck**



Keith Marnen, Terry Miller, Mandy Minson, and Gary & Sharon Yunto. These 19 individuals packed 15 items for giveaway that helped 219 families with 739 individuals including 226 children and 136 elderly with their food insecurity from the Boone County and surrounding area. Our next food truck and the first one for 2024 is scheduled for March 9<sup>th</sup>. If you are interested in helping and have not helped in the past, please let Mandy know.

Thank You to the 19 volunteers that helped on Saturday, November 11<sup>th</sup> with our 7th Northern Illinois Food Bank truck of 2023.

The volunteers who helped to unload, package and load into vehicles included: Dan Albrecht, Gene Berg, Rodney Brandmire, Larry Brendum, Dawn Calkins, Jeff & Michelle Ernest, Charles Foster, Arlyn Groen, Marie Hagen, Kathy Hansen, Sarah Hansen, Pastor Elizabeth Martin, Wayne Martin,





## Pioneer Luncheon

Just a reminder that our Pioneer potluck will be a week later on December 18th. Turkey, stuffing, and gravy will be provided for a small donation.

Please bring a dish to share and then we will enjoy Lorraine Carmichael's lovely piano music with sing along to carols. We will eat promptly at noon.

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## Witness Committee

**A Parade:** On Friday, December 1<sup>st</sup>, Zion will be participating in the Belvidere Hometown Christmas Parade. Volunteers are needed to walk in the parade and hand out knit caps with a Zion refrigerator magnet. We partner with Boone County CASA walking together by their float which will have our boxes of caps. The parade begins at 5:00 PM with line up at 4:30. The exact location has not yet been determined. Volunteers are needed. A signup sheet is in the narthex.

**A Celebration:** Sunday morning, December 10<sup>th</sup> following service, the Witness Committee will be hosting fellowship with a special cake celebrating the conclusion of a successful fall stewardship campaign. Results will be printed in the worship bulletin. **Thanks to everyone for supporting God's ministry here at Zion.**

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## Treasurer Update

We will soon bid farewell to the Year 2023. Here is a look at some of the ways Zion, through your generous giving, has shown the Community and the World that we are committed to sharing Christ's Love.

In addition to meeting our everyday financial obligations of the church, Zion continued sharing Christ's Love by: Hosting seven (7) Food trucks for the benefit of those that are food insecure in the Northern Illinois Region. Hosting and serving tasty meals once a month for the community free of charge. Sponsor/hosting the Baby Bank for those families having a hard time getting essential needs for their young children. Hometown Christmas Parade, where Zion will, once again, hand out warm hats. We continue our relationship with First Step by collecting school supplies, Thanksgiving baskets, mitten tree and angel tree. We raised \$3,220.00 to help in the relief effort for the tragic fire in Maui, \$1,000.00 was sent to help with Middle Eastern relief efforts. By sending these monies for Maui and Middle Eastern Relief through the ELCA, we are assured that 100% went to the victims of these disasters.

**THANK YOU** for your generous giving and dedication to Zion.

You will be receiving your 4<sup>th</sup> quarter giving statements around the middle of January 2024 and if you feel something is not correct, please let the Church office know as soon as possible.

Phone # 815.547.6102 or [zionoffice@zionbelvidere.org](mailto:zionoffice@zionbelvidere.org)

**REMINDER**, if you are planning on making a year-end donation to Zion, be sure that your donation is either **received in church on or before December 31<sup>st</sup> or postmarked by December 31<sup>st</sup>**.

*We are a Caring Congregation committed to Sharing Christ's Love with the World.*

Thank you and God Bless You



## A Blue Christmas Service

As we approach the Christmas season, for most, it is full of joy, family fun, and holiday cheer. For others, the season is anything but “the most wonderful time of the year,” because they are grieving or dealing with other struggles and losses.

The idea behind the Blue Christmas service is to create space for the acknowledgment of the heaviness often carried during this season, as well as offering the hope that Jesus gives. The Bible clearly acknowledges and makes space for pain, struggle, hardship, and tears — and so should we. The Blue service is all about creating a moment during a season that is noisy with celebration, to acknowledge the “both/and” of our emotions.



Pastor Elizabeth invites you to join her on Tuesday, December 19<sup>th</sup>, at 6:00 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall for a Blue Christmas service. We will share together in prayer, song, scripture, reflections, lighting candles, and the support of Christian community. All are welcome.



### Women of Zion

The turkey chicks have flown the coop (nest).

We were able to purchase 41 Thanksgiving meal baskets that were distributed to First Step Daycare Families and others identified by Zion members. Thank

you to everyone that donated and helped with this outreach to the community. Your generosity and commitment are greatly appreciated!



### Angel Tree (Helping Hands for First Step Day Care)

This year we have 17 names of children that need our help to have a gift to open on Christmas morning. Each ornament on the angel tree in the narthex will have the information you will need to purchase clothing for a child. Don't forget to write your name on the clipboard sheet next to the corresponding number on the ornament you have taken. Please remember to wrap the gift and attach the ornament to the gift. So that we can get the gifts to the

day care in a timely manner, we will need them returned to the church no later than, **Sunday, December 17, 2023**. Thank you in advance for all your help with this ministry project!





## **Sunday School News**

**Let Your Life's Light be a Window to Christ**



### **Attention Adults!!**

### **Come be a Part of the Sunday School Christmas Program**

Our Sunday School Christmas Program: *No Fuss All Congregation Christmas Program* is scheduled for December 17<sup>th</sup> during service. In addition to the Sunday School kids, all members of the Congregation are welcome to participate. All parts are Non-Speaking. You can be a shepherd, angel, animal, or wise person. You can pick out your costume on Dec. 17<sup>th</sup> before service, make it just a headpiece or a complete robe. To help us plan, there will be a sign-up sheet in the Narthex. Questions? Call Pat Castro at 815-520-5660.

Sunday School Kids - there will be a pizza party/practice for the program on Saturday Dec. 16<sup>th</sup> from 10:00am to 12:30pm.



### **Hometown Christmas Tree**



Come see all the ornaments that the kids of all ages made for the Hometown Christmas Tree on Dec. 1, at the Community Building. Come look for our Heart Themed Tree and add some change to our can. Thank you to all the people who came to make ornaments on Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>. We made lots of different kinds of ornaments, ate, talked, and had lots of fun.



### **First Bibles**



Congratulations to Elleney Ogan who received her Bible on October 29<sup>th</sup>, Reformation Sunday. No Sunday School on Dec. 24<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>. Sunday School resumes on Jan. 7<sup>th</sup>.

There will be no Christian Nurturing Meeting in December. Our next meeting will be January 21<sup>st</sup> at 11:15am. Come Join Us!

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**Starting in January the new office hours will be Monday-Thursday 9am-1pm. We are blessed to have such a hospitable person in our office. Please keep office visits brief so that Mandy has ample time to complete her office duties. Thank you!**

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**Christ in Our Home devotional books for January-March are available for pick up.**

# Happy Birthday from your Zion Family!



1-Mary Sell  
1-Bill Vorndran  
1-Kevin Watts  
4-Stephanie Cordray  
8-Larry Brendum  
8-Lisa Bruno

10-Nathan Hansen  
11-Linda Johnson  
16-Rick Zediker  
17-Traci Thies  
18-Jaxxen Sipe  
20-Geg Bruno

24-Ken Beever  
25-Avery Sinople  
26-Don Sell  
28-Cailyn Kottman  
28-Ken Downey



## From the Treasurer:

### General Fund

10/2023	Beginning Balance	\$ 10,470.87	10/2023
	Total Income	\$ 16,357.12	
	Total Expense	<u>\$ 15,937.99</u>	
	Balance	\$ 10,890.00	

### General Fund Reserve Savings (new Account)

Oct/2023	Beginning Balance	\$100,100.30
	Income (interest)	93.83
	Income (gift)	92,000.00
	Expenses	<u>0.00</u>
	Balance	\$192,257.64

### Building Fund

10/2023	Beginning Balance	\$( 4,936.17)
	Total Income	\$ 23,237.50
	Total Expense	<u>\$ 2,612.74</u>
	Balance	\$ 15,688.59

### Staff

Rev. Elizabeth Martin  
Intentional Interim Pastor

Mandy Minson  
Administrative Assistant

Ken Anderson  
Council President

Dan Albrecht  
Choir Director

Pat Castro  
Sunday School Director

Diane Vorndran  
Financial Secretary

Sharon Yunto  
Treasurer

### Worship Schedule

Sundays at 9:00am  
Thursdays at 7:00pm

Find Worship Videos at  
[www.zionbelvidere.com](http://www.zionbelvidere.com)

OR

On Facebook at  
[ZionBelvidere+](https://www.facebook.com/ZionBelvidere)

### Council Members

#### Term Through January 2024

Ken Anderson  
Kris Beever  
Rodney Brandmire  
Jen Downey  
Jeff Ernest  
Deana Foley

#### Term Through January 2025

Jody Archer  
Doug Shiloh  
Gary Yunto

#### Term Through January 2026

Gretel Baird  
Melody Johnson  
David Schumann

## Texts for the Month of December

### December 3

Isaiah 64:1-9  
1 Corinthians 1:3-9  
Mark 13:24-37

### December 10

Isaiah 40:1-11  
2 Peter 3:8-15  
Mark 1:1-8

### December 17

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11  
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24  
John 1:6-8, 19-28

### December 24

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16  
Romans 16:25-27  
Luke 1:26-38

### December 31

Isaiah 61:1-10—62:3  
Galatians 4:4-7  
Luke 2:22-40

December 2023						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
OFFICE HOURS Monday-Friday 9am-1pm					1 Hometown Christmas Parade 5:30pm	2 Church Decorating 9am  Baby Bank 9am-12pm
3 Sunday Worship @ 9am  Pastor Installation	4 Worship/Music 5pm	5 Advent Study 11:30am  Finance Meeting 5:30	6 Sewing/Quilting 9:00am	7 Choir 5pm/Bells 6pm  7:00 pm – Worship Holden Sundae	8	9
10 Sunday Worship @ 9am  Cantata  Confirmation 10:20am	11  Witness 6pm	12 Council Reports Due Advent Study 11:30am (Linda's Lounge) Belvidere Women's Club Rental 10:30am-2pm	13 Sewing/Quilting 9:00am  Baby Bank 4pm-6pm  Community Meal 5pm-6:00pm	14 Choir 5pm/Bells 6pm  7:00 pm – Worship	15	16 Christmas Program Pizza Party 10am-12:30pm
17 Sunday Worship @ 9am  Christmas Program	18 Baby Bank Restock 9am-12pm Pioneer Lunch 12:00pm AA Meeting 5pm Shiloh 6pm-8pm Christmas Phone Caroling 6:30pm	19 Advent Study 11:30am  Blue Christmas 6pm	20 Sewing/Quilting 9:00am  Council Meeting 7:00pm	21 Choir 5pm/Bells 6pm  7:00 pm – Worship Constitution Q&A	22	23
24 Sunday Worship 9am Constitution Q&A  Christmas Eve Worship 5pm 31  Sunday Worship @ 9am Constitution Q&A	25 OFFICE CLOSED  Tidings Articles Due	26	27 Sewing/Quilting 9:00am	28 NO Worship	29	30