

A Day to Honor Love

Valentine's Day is on the horizon. It is a day to celebrate love and romance. I remember fondly the shoebox I decorated every year in grade school to receive a valentine from all my classmates. I very carefully chose which card each of my friends should receive. Sometimes, Wayne and I celebrate the day with a nice dinner at home or out. Other times, it's just a card for each other, supporting the "Hallmark holiday." My biggest excitement is sending our granddaughters a Valentine's care package of love and fun.

February 14 is the adoration of Saint Valentine – well, possibly three different St. Valentines who were all martyrs. There is a legend about one of them who lived during the reign of Emperor Claudius II. War was an active part of Claudius's kingdom, but there was one problem: not enough soldiers. He surmised that men weren't signing up because of their wives and families. Claudius thought he had an easy solution – ban all marriages in Rome. The priest, Valentine, decided to defy the emperor's command, and he married couples in secret. Valentine was found out, arrested, and condemned to be beaten with clubs and beheaded. While he was in prison, he became friends with the jailer's daughter, and near his death, he wrote her a note, signing it "From Your Valentine." His death sentence was carried out on February 14, about 270 A.D. All three Valentine martyrs were persecuted for their expressions of faith and love.

Other stories have also contributed to why Valentine's Day is a day of romance. Over time, it has become what we know it today – a time to spend with someone special and celebrate the relationship of love and affection. The day has evolved into a secular celebration with little consideration for the saint for whom it is named.

Many in this area also recall in 2008, a gunman entered the Northern IL University campus, and in a mass shooting, six people, including the gunman, died that day. I remember that the congregation I served gave the campus ministry candles for their nightly vigils. A couple of us from my church went down with food and offered our pastoral support to students and teachers. The site of the six crosses with sentiments written all over them sticks with me today.

Valentine's Day is about romance and tiny heart candies with loving sentiments written on them. It's a day that lifts up a martyr. It's a day that brings back terrible memories for some. In all of these situations, there is a constant. The love of God in Christ was the driving force for the faithfulness of all those who were martyred. The love of our dying Lord Jesus on the cross met all those who were struck with fear, pain, and grief in 2008. And the love of Christ is the foundation for our relationships of love and binds us together.

This year, Valentine's Day falls on Ash Wednesday. We remember who we are in our humanness and whose we are as children of God. As we walk to Christ's cross during this season of Lent, we remember that it is Jesus who was martyred and gave us the ultimate example in his crucifixion of what it means to love. *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends."* John 15:12-13

On this day dedicated to love, I urge us all to reflect on the times that the love of God has been present for us and to consider the ways that the love of Christ is manifest in our words and deeds for the life and love of the world.

In the love of Christ,
Pastor Elizabeth Martin



Community Meal

Our "Breakfast at Night" meal went over so well last April we thought we would try it again in January. It was an even bigger hit this time, as 84 people enjoyed a hearty nighttime breakfast. We served pancakes, hash browns, sausage, scrambled eggs, biscuits & gravy, and donuts.

Thank you to this busy group of volunteers who set up, cooked, served, and cleaned up: Marilee, Dawn, JoAnne, Kris, Marge, Linda, Marie, Terry, Gary, Kris, Patti, Ronnie, and Donna.

February's meal will be another busy night since it occurs on Ash Wednesday and Valentine's Day. We will need extra help, especially for clean-up because we would like to be completely done before that evening's Ash Wednesday service. Please sign up on the sheet posted on the bulletin board.

John Enright

Chili Cook-Off

The Zion Lutheran Chili Cook-Off will be held on Thursday, February 1st. It will be held in Fellowship Hall starting at 5:30 pm and go up until the 7:00 pm worship service that evening.

In addition to a wide variety of chili recipes, there will be soups, bread, and desserts. Bring your friends, and your appetite and vote for your favorite chili or soup with your dollars. The money raised at this annual fundraising event will go toward Lutheran World Relief.



If you plan on bringing a pot of chili, soup, bread, or dessert, please make a note of it on the sign-up sheet posted on the bulletin board. It is incredibly important to let the organizers know so that there are enough tables set up for the event.

Pioneer Luncheon

We will be meeting for our February Luncheon on Monday, the 12th. Serving at Noon.

We will be having Meat Loaf and Scalloped Potatoes this month. Lyle & Patti are making meat loaves & Nancy Brendum also. Patti & Cheryl are bringing scalloped potatoes.

Please bring a dish to pass and your own table service. We will have a Valentine's Day program just for fun! Come & join us, the more the merrier!

Patti Lee





Introducing the Faith Medical Response Team

The Faith Medical Response Team (FMRT) is a committee that meets virtually at Zion, via e-mail or zoom, to address the health and wellness of the congregation. This team follows communicable illness trends and makes recommendations to the council for preventing the spread of infection. This team is also exploring health and wellness and are excellent contacts for community resources. Are you a nurse, physician, advanced provider, social worker, teacher, EMT, police officer, firefighter, or counselor? You would be a great addition to our team! Please reach out to get yourself added to our flexible committee. Our virtual meetings are asynchronous and a perfect way for busy people to join a ministry at Zion.

This month, the FMRT is offering information on respiratory illnesses. Respiratory illnesses include the “cold” virus, influenza, RSV, and Covid-19. Additionally, pneumonia and strep throat are also prevalent this time of year. The FMRT supports your decision to vaccinate or to not vaccinate against respiratory viruses and has provided the council with information for you to learn what your options are. Please follow [this link below](#) for more information and consult your family doctor when making decisions about your health. As always, please continue to wash your hands frequently, cover your cough, and stay home if you are ill. Zion’s services are streamed live on Facebook and available for review on Vimeo if you are not feeling well enough to attend in person or have been exposed to someone else who is ill.

Immunization Recommendations for the 2023–2024 Respiratory Disease Season: At-A-Glance

INFLUENZA • COVID-19 • RESPIRATORY SYNCYTIAL VIRUS (RSV)



CDC recommends the following for the 2023–2024 respiratory disease season:

- Everyone ages 6 months and older receive influenza vaccination.
- Everyone ages 6 months and older receive COVID-19 vaccination.
- Infants, some young children, and pregnant persons receive RSV immunization routinely.
- Older adults receive RSV immunization using shared clinical decision-making.

It’s important that people stay caught up on **all** recommended vaccines. When patients make an appointment for fall and winter vaccination, offer all other routine vaccines that are due.

[Immunization Recommendations for the 2023-2024 Respiratory Disease Season: At-A-Glance \(cdc.gov\)](https://www.cdc.gov/immunization/recommendations/2023-2024-respiratory-disease-season-at-a-glance)

Zion’s 130th Anniversary!!!!

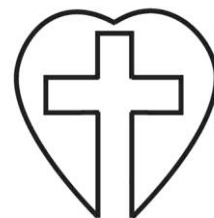
Remembering the past as we plan into the future.

August 29th will be Zion's 130th anniversary. We are planning a year of celebration. Our first planning meeting is scheduled for February 17th at 10am. If you would like to help plan, come and join members in the library. If you are interested but can’t make the meeting contact Cheryl Sturges or Jody Archer and we will let you know when we plan to meet next.



Newcomer Informational Gathering

Are you a new or longtime coming visitor to Zion? Would you like to know a little more about Zion's ministry and what it means that we are part of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America? Maybe you or a family member has been considering baptism. Pastor Elizabeth and other leaders will share and answer questions about Zion, being Lutheran in the ELCA, and hand out resources. Join us on Sunday, March 17th after worship. If you choose, you can also consider membership at Zion, however there is no pressure to do so.



Sharing Christ's Love

Members of Zion now is the time for you to consider asking that friend, neighbor, or co-worker to visit church. Tell them what being part of this congregation means to you – why you show up – what you are involved in. How does being a member of Zion bring you joy, comfort, purpose? Personal invitation is the best method of introducing newcomers to our congregation.

"Shrove Tuesday"/Mardi Gras



Can't make it to New Orleans for Carnival? Join us for a taste of "Shrove Tuesday"/ Mardi Gras on Sunday, February 11th, for a little taste of Mardi Gras-- pancakes, sausages, and a little Dixieland music! Maybe we'll even have some pancake races!?! Laissez Les bons temps roller!

Thanks,
Carolyn Jurisch
Worship and Music Committee

Hope Overflow



Hope Overflow, a group of students from Wartburg College (ELCA), will be visiting Belvidere from February 28- March 2. They will be completing service projects and leading worship. These students are well known for their artistic ability and musicianship. The church will be hosting the students "lock-

in" style and the Belvidere YMCA is allowing use of their facility for showers and recreation. Projects are being planned with Habitat for Humanity and First Step Day Care. Watch for more details and come support our ELCA young adults at Thursday night worship during their stay!

Women of Zion

We will be meeting on Saturday, February 10, 2024 – 9:00am to 11:00am. Come spend some time with friends and learn a couple of new ideas for decorating cookies. No baking is required. The cookies will be ready for you to decorate with your creative touch. A snack of coffee and "treats" will be served. Please sign up on the heart at the back door entrance.



Sunday School News



Let Your Life's Light be a Window to Christ



Sunday School Christmas Program

Our Sunday School Christmas Program: *No Fuss All Congregation Christmas Program* was held on December 17th during service. In addition to the Sunday School kids, many members of the Congregation participated. It went great! Thank you to all the youth and adults who participated.



A special thank you goes to Curt and Brenda Tobin for their gift of the erasable travel tablets that all the kids got in their Thank-you bags.

Hometown Christmas Tree

Thanks to all the ornaments that everyone made the Hometown Christmas Tree looked festive and won 7th place in the loose change voting! This was out of 102 trees. Great job everyone.



Vacation Bible School

It's never too early to mark your calendar for Vacation Bible school. VBS will be June 17 – 21 from 9:00 am to 11:30 am. More information to follow.

Come join us for our next Christian Nurturing Meeting on February 18 at 11:15 am.

Meals on Wheels

We need volunteers to sign up for Meals on Wheels. The dates are February 19th-23rd. It requires two people to be signed up per day. You need to report to the Keen Age Center between 11 am-11:15 am for your shift. If you can help please sign up on the bulletin board in the Narthex or call Mandy at 815-547-6102 and let her know.



Lent Soup & Study

You are invited to join in a soup lunch and Lent study with Pastor Elizabeth facilitating. So often in Lent we talk about “giving something up.” This year we might consider “adding something meaningful.” The group will take turns providing soups, breads, and dessert.

The study uses material by Rev. Adam Hamilton, a Methodist pastor and theologian. His material is sound and accessible. The Advent study group enjoyed him. We will journey together through *24 Hours That Changed the World*. Hamilton guides us, step by step, through the last day of Jesus’ life. We travel to the Holy Land by video to visit the sites where those events took place.

We will meet for seven sessions on Tuesdays beginning at 11:30 a.m.

February 20 – The Last Supper

February 27 – The Garden of Gethsemane

March 5 – Condemned by the Righteous

March 12 – Jesus, Barabbas, and Pilate

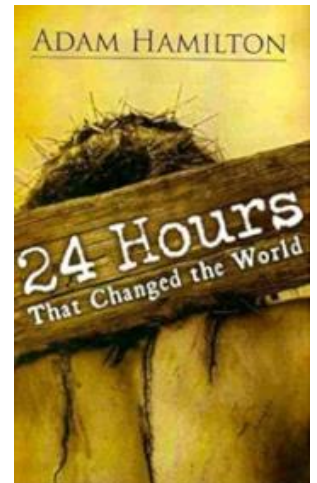
March 19 – The Torture and Humiliation of the King

March 24 – *Palm Sunday*

March 26 – The Crucifixion

March 31 – *Easter*

April 2 – Christ the Victor



Synod News



Each year our synod puts on a Congregational Resourcing Event which is open to everyone. This year it is on March 16, 2024, at Sauk Valley Community College in Dixon, Illinois. The theme is *Open God's Story*. This will be a time to connect God's work throughout the Bible with God's work in our lives.

This full day will be time to gather together as we share ideas and inspiration for all the great ways we are opening God's story together in our congregations and in our communities. Our guest speaker is Rev. Miguel Gomez-Acosta, the Senior Director for New Ministry Development and Evangelism at the Churchwide Office of the ELCA. He will talk about the value of evangelism and share some stories that help us connect scripture with today.

The day includes morning coffee treats, lunch and two workshops hosted by both lay and rostered members of our synod to share about worship, education, leadership, and outreach. These workshops will be experiential and a time for sharing resources. The workshop listing will be shared as soon as it is ready.

Registration is now open and closes on March 2nd. Go to the synod website: www.nisynod.org and scroll down to the Open God's Story logo. The registration fee is \$35 for the event and must be paid with a credit card. If this is not possible, please contact our church office at 309-794-4004.

THANK YOU

It's always enjoyable to come to church after Thanksgiving and see all the decorations for the Christmas season in the Church, in the Narthex, and in the Fellowship Hall. As we moved into January it all had to be carefully taken down and packed for another year. Thank you to the following individuals who took on that project: Marge Olson, Jeff and Michelle Ernest, John Bender, Arlyn Groen, Kris Beever, Jane Schuessler, Gary and Sharon Yunto. Thank you!

As a member of Zion, I would like to recognize and thank the people who organized and put into action the Zion Prayer Ministry, especially Kris Enright and Michelle Ernest. The Prayer Request mailboxes add a welcoming feeling to our entry ways. The Weekly Devotions on line are always meaningful, and the Daily Inspirational flip book starts anyone's day off on the right path.

Thank you and God bless you!
A Fellow Follower of Jesus

We want to express our deepest gratitude to everyone that was a part of Mickey's funeral-before, during, and after.
Everything was very special and truly honored what a great person Mickey was.

Thank you! Thank you!
The family of 'Mickey' Johnson

Thank you Pastor Elizabeth and Council for the very nice note that I received yesterday. It is a very rare thing for me to receive a written thank you after I have supplied at a congregation and I supplied 18 times in 2023! And it was also thoughtful to mention my wife. In addition, we were sent home with some flowers that looked like they just came from the florist.

In Christ,
Pastor Arlyn Tolzmann

Thank you John Bender and Arlyn Groen for installing the shelf in The Baby Bank!



Happy Birthday from your Zion Family!



2-Dale Temple	10-Dan Burow	20-Karen Ballweg
3-Vera Sandberg	15-Mike Beever	22-Robert Kozlowski
3-Michelle Ernest	16-Donna Brookbank	23-Lyle Lee
4-Sloan Ortiz	18-Sandra Gustafson	24-Julie Pinkston
5-Gavin Sipe	19-Todd Graves	25-Dyaln Girone
10-Henry Minson	19-Patricia Scherf	27-John Enright
		28-Michelle Kottman



From the Treasurer:

General Fund

12/2023	Beginning Balance	\$ 3,919.51	12/2023
	Total Income	\$ 22,861.00	
	Total Expense	<u>\$ 17,473.28</u>	
	Balance	\$ 9,307.23	

Building Fund

Beginning Balance	\$17,272.27
Total Income	\$ 4,048.50
Total Expense	<u>\$ 2,617.72</u>
Balance	\$ 18,703.05

General Fund Reserve Savings (new Account)

DEC/2023	Beginning Balance	\$100,336.14
	Income (interest)	59.55
	Expenses	<u>0.00</u>
	Balance	\$100,395.69

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

OR

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

Council Members

Term Through January 2025

Ken Anderson
Rodney Brandmire
Jody Archer
Doug Shiloh
Gary Yunto

Term Through January 2026

Gretel Baird
Melody Johnson
David Schumann

Term Through January 2027

OPEN
OPEN
OPEN

Texts for the Month of February

February 4

Isaiah 40:21-31

1 Corinthians 9:16-23

Mark 1:29-39

February 11

2 Kings 2:1-12

2 Corinthians 4:3-6

Mark 9:2-9

February 18

Genesis 9:8-17

1 Peter 3:18-22

Mark 1:9-15

February 25

Genesis 14:1-7, 15-116

Romans 4:13-25

Mark 8:31-38

February 2024						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 Choir 5pm/Bells 6pm Chili Cook-Off 5:30pm 7:00 pm – Worship	2 Office Closed	3
4 Sunday Worship @ 9am Installation of Council David's Den after service	5 Worship/Music 5pm	6	7 Sewing/Quilting 9am Bible Study 9:30am	8 Choir 5pm/Bells 6pm 7:00 pm – Worship	9 Office Closed	10 WOZ Meeting/Cookie Decorating 9am-11:30am
11 Sunday Worship @ 9am Confirmation 10:20am David's Den after service	12 Pioneer Lunch 12:00pm Witness 6pm	13 Council Reports Due	14 Sewing/Quilting 9am Bible Study 9:30am Baby Bank 4pm-6pm Community Meal 5pm-6pm Ash Wednesday Service 7pm	15 Choir 5pm/Bells 6pm NO SERVICE	16 Office Closed	17 4-H Rental
18 Sunday Worship @ 9am Christian Nurturing 11:15am	19 Baby Bank Restock 9am-12pm Meals on Wheels 11am	20 Meals on Wheels 11am Lent Soup and Bible Study 11:30am	21 Sewing/Quilting 9am Meals on Wheels 11am Council Meeting 7:00pm	22 Meals on Wheels 11am Choir 5pm/Bells 6pm Barnabas 6pm 7:00 pm – Worship	23 Office Closed Meals on Wheels 11am	24
25 Sunday Worship @ 9am David's Den after service Confirmation 10:20am	26 Tidings Articles Due	27 Lent Soup and Bible Study 11:30am	28 Sewing/Quilting 9am	29 Choir 5pm/Bells 6pm 7:00 pm – Worship Holden Sundae Wartburg College	OFFICE HOURS Monday-Thursday 9am-1pm Closed Fridays	