

## New Year's Resolutions?

So here we go, the start of another year. For many, that means making resolutions to lose weight, quit smoking or drinking, eat better, spend more time with family, exercise, pray and do devotions, commit to reducing debt, give more to church or charity, reduce stress, and much more. For me, New Year's Resolutions are like riding a rollercoaster. Just ask my family. I don't like them, and on the rollercoaster of resolution, I usually end up falling off.

In a way, they are like creating our own law. We set a goal, or law, to live by over the next year - things we want TO do and NOT to do. All these resolutions are good things. They are life-giving efforts. We are trying to ensure that by doing or not doing these things, we will be healthier, happier, more devoted, better stewards, and the like.

Sometimes we succeed, and many other times, well, you know, our gym membership goes unused; chips and desserts enter our bodies again; we are too busy for the doctor; we allow work to stress us and take us away from our families; debt and spending goes up, savings dwindle, charities and the church come last; the Bible and devotionals collect dust. Our life-giving laws can enter a death-like state.

The Apostle Paul wrestled with similar pains. He knows that God gave the Law to be life-giving. If the people followed the Ten Commandments and the rest of the Law, they would be happy, healthy, devoted, secure, honorable, and loving. And yet, we humans are corruptible, indifferent, rebellious, and selfish, and the law ends up revealing our brokenness. If the law is so good, why are we so bad at keeping it?

In Romans, Paul says, "For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do." (Romans 7:19). Then he throws his hands in the air and asks, "Who will rescue me?" Paul also knows the answer, and it is Jesus Christ. Jesus, who personally entered the human condition in the incarnation we celebrated at Christmas, shares in the mess of a struggling world. Jesus, who by his cross and resurrection, brought healing to a law-breaking, dying world. Life was ultimately given, not through the law, but through Christ.

That's why Paul says, "Instead of redoubling our own efforts, we simply embrace what the Spirit is doing in us." God's Spirit is a gift to us. We hear that promise in the waters of baptism. Those waters hold a dying to the old self and a rising to a new life given to us in Christ. The Spirit gives us the gift of faith, something the law could never do.

Our will is only sometimes strong, and we need help. That help comes in the life of Christ, reacting and responding in and through us. What if we let the Spirit help us experience true life? Think about it: what if we started each day by saying, "I am a beloved child of God." What could that affect? What if we reflected on God's grace, love, mercy, and Christ dwelling in us before our feet even hit the floor? Maybe we'd strive a little harder to be healthier, make an effort to take a vacation or spend more time with family, give with greater joy, and serve with more passion because that's how strong the hold of God's love is on our lives.

It's always important for us to have goals and challenges in our lives. So, make some resolutions if that is helpful to you, but don't feel obligated. Focusing on our New Life in Christ might serve us better, which is a gift to us all.

God's goodness to you in the New Year,  
Pastor Elizabeth



### Community Meal

Through Zion's affiliation with the Northern Illinois Food Bank, we were able to obtain nearly 100 pounds of baby back ribs for about \$13. Along with two side dishes, 82 meals of baby back ribs were served at the December Community Meal. It was a busy night for this group of dedicated volunteers: Marge, Sharon, JoAnne, Terry, Linda, Kathy, Kris, Dawn, Ronnie, Nancy, Delaney, Larry, Marilee, and of course, Sweet Baby Ray.

A total of 896 meals were served at the Community Meals in 2023. This was 170 more meals than in 2022. The menu in 2023 included four meals we have never done before, highlighted by a donated prime rib! Other new meals were chicken parmesan, lasagna, and in December, the baby back ribs. These meals were very labor intensive, but the incredible volunteer cooks were always up to the task.

Thank you for supporting this ministry throughout the year.

John Enright

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### 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 going 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.

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### Pioneer Luncheon

We will be meeting on Monday, January 8<sup>th</sup> with our noon potluck. The chicken will be provided. Please bring a dish to pass. Let's just have fun and play bingo! Please bring a white elephant gift to exchange for prizes.





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

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

Thank you to everyone that participated in the Angel tree gift event this year. The First Step Day Care staff were very “appreciative” of the gifts; that helped to make Christmas a little brighter for some of their families. As always, we couldn’t have done this without the help of all of you here at Zion. Thanks for participating in this worthwhile event!

Thank you to the following people who participated in decorating the church for the Advent/Christmas season: Jane Schuessler, Beth Hong, Marge Olson, Jeff Ernest, Arlyn Groen, Kathy Hansen, Gretel & Rocco Baird, Tammy & Trish Zastrow, and Deana Foley.



We will be “undecorating” the church on Saturday, January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2024 @ 9:00 AM. Come join us!

**Starting in January the new office hours will be Monday-Thursday 9 am-1 pm. 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 pickup.**

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### Friendly Reminders

January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024, there will be a special congregational meeting after service. The agenda only has one item, to approve our newly updated constitution.

January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2024, is the annual congregational meeting. Our agenda will include the following:

- Election of council members
- Approve the newly updated budget
- Ratification of constitution
- Old business
- New business

Your attendance will be deeply appreciated.

Ken Anderson  
Council President

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Thank you for supporting me as your Interim Pastor. The Installation service was really nice, especially with the added soloist and Pastor Ebener's preaching. Wayne and I greatly appreciated the brunch. It was delicious! I look at this special day as not just for me, rather a day of celebration for the whole congregation of Zion.

Grace and peace,  
Pastor Elizabeth and Wayne

thank you!



# Happy Birthday from your Zion Family!



4-Ken Anderson	17-John Bender	24-Trish Zastrow
6-Yvonne Miralrio	19-Melita Ogan	25-Jim Twyning
7-Kerry Thies	19-Melody Johnson	26-Sandra Rubeck
9-Gerry Trieloff	19-Mary Verken	27-Kris Beever
15-Dawn Brunschon	23-Lesley Ahlberg	27-Cindy Foster

## From the Treasurer:

### General Fund

11/2023	Beginning Balance	\$ 10,890.00	11/2023
	Total Income	\$ 11,960.05	
	Total Expense	<u>\$ 18,930.54</u>	
	Balance	\$ 3,919.51	

### Building Fund

Beginning Balance	\$15,688.59
Total Income	\$ 2,952.00
Total Expense	<u>\$ 1,368.32</u>
Balance	\$ 17,272.27

### General Fund Reserve Savings (new Account)

Nov/2023	Beginning Balance	\$192,257.64
	Income (interest)	78.50
	Moved to 7 Month CD	92,000.00
	Expenses	<u>0.00</u>
	Balance	\$100,336.14

#### 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 January

#### January 7

Isaiah 60:1-6  
Ephesians 3:1-12  
Matthew 2:1-12

#### January 14

1 Samuel 3:1-20  
1 Corinthians 6:12-20  
John 1:43-51

#### January 21

Jonah 3:1-5, 10  
1 Corinthians 7:29-31  
Mark 1:14-20

#### January 28

Deuteronomy 18:15-20  
1 Corinthians 8:1-13  
Mark 1:21-28

## January 2024

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 <b>OFFICE CLOSED New Year's Day</b>	2 Soup Lunch Advent Study 11:30am	3	4 Choir 5pm Bells 6pm  <b>7pm – Worship</b>	5 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	6 <b>Undecorating the Church 9am</b>
7 <b>Sunday Worship @ 9am Baptism of Our Lord  Special Congregational Meeting  Confirmation 10:20am</b>	8 Annual Reports Due Pioneer Lunch 12pm  Worship/Music 5pm  Witness 6pm	9 <b>Council Reports Due  Finance 5:30pm</b>	10 Sewing/Quilting 9am  Bible Study 9:30am  Baby Bank 4pm-6pm  Community Meal 5pm-6pm	11 Choir 5pm Bells 6pm  <b>7pm – Worship Holden Sundaes</b>	12 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	13
14 <b>Sunday Worship @ 9am  Informational Meeting</b>	15 Baby Bank Restock 9am-12pm	16	17 Sewing/Quilting 9am  Bible Study 9:30am  <b>Council Meeting 7pm</b>	18 Choir 5pm Bells 6pm  <b>7pm – Worship Informational Meeting</b>	19 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	20
21 <b>Sunday Worship @ 9am  Informational Meeting  Confirmation 10:20am  Christian Nurturing 11:15am</b>	22 <b>Tidings Articles Due</b>	23	24 Sewing/Quilting 9am  Bible Study 9:30am	25 Choir 5pm Bells 6pm  <b>7pm – Worship Informational Meeting  Barnabas 6pm</b>	26 <b>OFFICE CLOSED</b>	27 Baby Bank 9am-12pm
28 <b>Sunday Worship @ 9am  Annual Meeting</b>	29	30	31 Sewing/Quilting 9am Bible Study 9:30am		<b>OFFICE HOURS Monday- Thursday 9am-1pm Closed Fridays</b>	