DECEMBER 2024/JANUARY 2025 NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BY: ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, PERU ALEX GARNCARZ, PASTOR Phone:815-223-2671 Email:office@zionperu.org www.zionperu.org FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK: ZION UCC, PERU, IL

Dear Zion Church Family and Friends,

What a joy and privilege it is to be part of this vibrant and loving church family! As we approach the end of another year, I find myself thinking about how God has blessed us and worked through us in meaningful ways. This past month has been a testament to the spirit of community and faith that defines Zion Church.

We hosted an ecumenical Thanksgiving Eve service, welcoming members from seven churches to worship together. What a powerful reminder of our unity in Christ! It was a blessing to come together in shared praise and gratitude.

Our 6th Annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner was another great success, bringing joy and connection to many in our community. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to everyone who contributed their time, energy, and resources to make it possible. Your effort shows the love of Christ in action.

I am also thrilled by the participation in our Tuesday evening adult Bible study. It's a blessing to see so many of you digging deeper into God's Word and growing in faith together. Your commitment is inspiring, and I look forward to continuing this journey with you.

Now, we find ourselves in the beautiful and sacred season of Advent. This is a time to pause, reflect, and prepare our hearts for the celebration of Christ's birth. I am eager to observe this meaningful season with you, whether through worship, fellowship, or quiet moments of devotion.

To each and every one of you receiving this newsletter: thank you for being a part of the Zion Church family. It is truly a privilege and honor to be your pastor. Your faith, kindness, and dedication make this church family so very special. Please know that you are deeply appreciated and loved.

As we celebrate Advent, Christmas, and welcome a new year, I pray God's blessings upon you and your loved ones. May this season fill your heart with peace, joy, and hope.

Wishing you a blessed Advent, a Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year!

With love and gratitude for each of you, Pastor Alex





<u>Members present</u>: Pastor Alex, Larry Grosenbach, Arnie Watkins, Marty Johnson, Jerry Koehler, Dinelle Freschi, Elecia Lindenmier.

Larry Grosenbach called meeting to order.

Treasurer's report: Motion to approve by Arnie W., seconded by Jerry K. Motion carried.

<u>Christian Education</u>: Sunday School OK. Lauren K. volunteered on next year VBS. Terri K. & Elecia L. working on a small Christmas program Dec. 22 service with kids singing.

Evangelism: Dinelle F. sending out cards.

<u>Missions:</u> Working on PADS meals. Social worker from LaSalle School District- Thanksgiving meal donation. HyVee will also donate food.

Building and Grounds: Flashing on west side needs to be fastened down.

Women's Guild: Cookie Sale in the works.

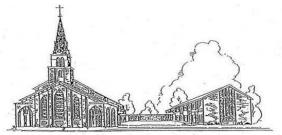
<u>Renewal Team:</u> Church items to be available in fellowship hall: shirts, caps, etc. Samples to be displayed. Diane has helped in putting together welcome packs.

<u>Minister's report</u>: Attended 2 IV Food Pantry Board of Directors meeting. Met with ministers group twice. Recorded four radio shows that aired on WLPO. Attended Committee on Ministry meeting on November 6. Coordinated the PADS meal for October.Met with Ordination Candidates Group three times. Counseled 5 individuals and 2 couples. 3 hospital visits. Attended 2 funerals. Officiated 1 funeral (Bill Vlastnik). Zion hosted Prairie Association Fall Cluster Meeting on October 24. Met with Renewal Team October 28. Attended Illinois Conference Annual Celebration in Western Springs on Ocober 31, November 1, 2. We had morning worship and a delicious lunch at Pilgrim Park on November 3. Met with Women's Guild on November 7. Led Bible Study November 12. Topic is "The Chosen" television series. We had 17 in attendance at our first study. CREW Sunday School is steady. Children continue to take part in morning worship. Looking forward to Harvest Home Sunday on November 24, Ecumenical Thanksgiving Eve Service, Community Thanksgiving Dinner and Advent which begins December 1. We are busy! Respectfully submitted, Pastor Alex

<u>Old Business</u>: Still need ideas for when Pastor Alex is on sabbatical. 14 Sundays needed. Rev. Kay Harding would like to write sermons and will be available for 4 Sundays.

Marty J. made a motion to adjourn meeting. Meeting ended with The Lord's Prayer. Respectfully submitted by Marty Johnson





Zion United ahurch of ahrist

In Need of Ongoing Prayer:

Evie Coulter, Jim Brown, Karen Kradle, Pam, Arnie & Jan Watkins, Katie Grosenbach, Dixie Tonozzi, Audrey Clements family, Zimmer Family, Tim P., Michelle, Eric & Tina, Jackson, Bill Vlastnik Family, Rusty & Mary Thies, Dale Jacobson, Disaster victims, Jeff, Rod Petrowski Family, Mag Maubach, Jim, Nation, Paul Nave, Jeff Rietgraf, Jean Mikus, Deb Cooper, Kathy Radke Family, Ryan, Jyll Janz, Josie, Steve & Audrey, Carol Harris Family, Ben Vowels, Sr. Family, Dick & Alice Tostovarsnik, Priscilla Dean, Tom & Gretchen Kaszynski, Lindenmier family, Kevin & Anne Orval, The Smith Family, Art Ramey Family, Jean Spayer, Emily, Renewal Team, Cindy Harzheim, Marilyn Haslam, Paul Lewis, Ron Narczewski, Bob & Holly Antkowiak.



The Altar Flowers November 10 were In Memory of Sondra Henkel, Dinelle's grandma, from The Freschi Family.

The Altar Flowers November 24 were In Memory of Dorothy Borostowski, from The Borostowski Family.

Memorials for Bill Vlastnik were given by Rev. Kay Harding, Lois Wilmot, Shirley Janz & Son Bill Janz, Kent Terry, Steve & Carol Theisinger, Lori Keenan, Mary & John Armon, J. Davis & Mary Small and Son John, Larry & Cheryl Grosenbach, Bill & Phyllis Bender, Bill Johnson, Jim Greening, Dona Ostermeyer, Erin Lewis, The Breuning Family.



Flower Charts There are many open dates for Altar flowers. The dates are hung on the bulletin board outside of the Fellowship Hall. We have 4 months hanging at a time. If you would like to reserve flowers you may sign up on the chart or contact the church office to ask about availability. Altar Flowers will be seen on YouTube services, the weekly bulletin, monthly newsletter, and on the church website in the posted bulletin. The cost for flowers is \$25.00. Please be sure to include all names, first and last, and any information you would like added to announcement.

THANK YOU FOR HARVEST HOME 2024

The Harvest Home Festival at Zion was started in 1966 by the Youth Fellowship. At that time the youth decorated and participated in the worship service. Food in institutional sized cans was requested because the food was donated to children's homes which over the years included the UCC Bensenville Children's Home, the UCC Ulich Children's Home, the UCC Sunburst Children's Home, and the Princeton Covenant Children's Home. In 1982 when the Illinois Valley Food Pantry was started, the donations of food were divided between the pantry and a children's home. With the



disappearance of the residential children's homes in favor of placement in families, and the growing need of the food pantry in our community, all food was donated to the pantry. Zion members have always been very generous in giving and working for the pantry and this year was no exception. All of the food donated will be picked up by the IV Food Pantry and distributed for Christmas dinners.

So many members and friends responded so generously. Let's be extra thankful that we participate in such a caring church. -Jim



Thank you to all who helped with the wonderful Thanksgiving meal served at Zion! It was a fantastic day!

****We will be decorating the church sanctuary for Advent on Saturday, November 30**, at **10:00 AM**. We need volunteers, and the more hands we have, the quicker the work will go! Come join us as we prepare our space for Advent season! See you there!



Advent begins December 1st

Join us Sundays as we prepare our hearts and lives to celebrate the birth of Jesus.

"At this Christmas when Christ comes, will He find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving the others with God's own love and concern."

- Mother Teresa, Love: A Fruit Always in Season



The Illinois Valley Flute Ensemble Recital: Festival of Flutes will be Sunday, December 8th at 2:00pm here at Zion. The event is free and open to the public. A variety of holiday music will be featured. We hope to see you!



Zion Diners

Mark your calendars for the **Zion Diners Christmas Party!** The event will take place on Thursday, December 19th at 6:00pm at Liberty Restaurant and will feature the **famous White Elephant gift exchange.** Dixie Tonozzi will be hosting. Please let her know if you are planning to attend. The Diners will also meet Thursday, January 17th at 6:00pm with the place to be announced. All are welcome!





COOKIES SALE COUNT DOWN



Thanksgiving has come and is gone (except perhaps the leftovers) and we hope that everyone had a wonderful day. As of this writing the Cookie Sale is just two weeks away. So here is a rundown of what you can do to help make it a big success.

Finalize your plans for whatever you are going to bake. Make your grocery list accordingly. Put on some holiday music and have fun baking. Remember that we have 9 inch plastic pie shells available at church to make transporting pies easier. They will work well for round coffee cakes rolls and muffins, too. They are located on a table in the fellowship hall.

> Tell your family, friends and neighbors about the sale. Word of mouth is a great way to generate interest. Invitations sheets on light green paper are available for you to share. They are available at the back of the sanctuary and in the fellowship hall. They also make a good info sheet for you to use if you are inviting folks via text, phone call or social media.

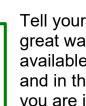
Help arrange the fellowship hall for the sale after worship on Sunday the 8th. This should take no more than half an hour if we have lots of helpers. We'll also bring down the supplies needed for the sale from storage.

> Help put the cookies in "display boxes" ready to be set out on the tables, package "specialty cookies" and those that are fragile or sticky, price other baked goods and candy, and arrange the goodies on the tables for sale. This will happen Thursday, Dec. 12th starting at 9:00am. Please try to have your baked goods at the church by then. The church will be open early that morning, Wednesday afternoon and early evening. Remember to label your items and indicate which have nuts in them.

Come help with the sale on Friday December 13. If you are going to help with the sale please arrive by 2:30pm for final instructions and set up. If you will be coming later to help with cleanup plan arrive about 5:30pm. And of course, do a little cookie shopping yourself!

And thank you all in advance for making the sale a great success!











Luminaries and Poinsettias

Orders for Luminaries and Poinsettias are now being taken. The deadline is December 22nd. The orders can be in memory of those who have passed or in honor of someone. Please fill out the order form and send to the church. Contact the church office with any questions. Thank you!

Luminaries to benefit the Food Pantry are now being sold for \$10.00 each. They will be set out and lit on Christmas Eve. Once again we hope to reach our goal of 100 luminaries. Please fill out the order form and put it in the offering plate or send to the church office. Please give all donation information by Sunday, December 22nd . In Memory of:	
In Honor of:	
From:	and the second s
Total number of Luminaries=	
Poinsettias	
Poinsettias can now be ordered. The cost is \$10.00 each. Please fill out the order form and put it in the offering plate or send to the church office. Please give all information by Sunday, December 22nd .	
In Memory of <u>:</u>	
In Honor of:	
From <u>.</u>	1
Total number of Poinsettias=	
Amount enclosed =	

The Luminary & Poinsettia Booklet will be printed in the Christmas Eve bulletins and available to view online at www.zionperu.org



Hey Families! Get ready for an adventure because our Sunday School program, CREW, is back and better than ever! Join us every Sunday morning at 9:00AM for a fun-filled hour designed for kids in kindergarten through 6th grade. At CREW, we dive into amazing stories, unleash our creativity with awesome crafts, and play exciting games that will keep everyone engaged and smiling! It's a great opportunity to make new friends, learn about faith, and have fun! Don't miss out on the fun—come join the CREW this Sundav!

We can't wait to see your smiling faces! See you there! *Zion Children's Christmas Program will be on December 22nd during morning worship. You don't want to miss this!*



DECEMBER 24th CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE AT 7:00 pm IN-PERSON AND AVAILABLE ONLINE (YOU TUBE)



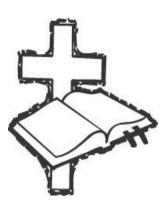


I wish you all a wonderful Christmas season and a Happy, Healthy New Year! Your Secretary, Erin





Listen to Pastor Alex at 8:25 every Sunday morning on 103.9 **WLPO**. Tell your friends!



Bible Study

We're excited to announce a new Bible Study series Tuesdays at 6:30 PM in the Fellowship Hall. This is a hybrid event, so you're welcome to join us in person at the church or participate via Zoom from home. Our study is based on the popular TV series, *The Chosen*, which brings the stories of the Bible to life in a fresh, powerful way. We'll explore themes from each episode, dive deeper into Scripture, and share our insights together. This study is open to all adults, and we encourage you to invite a friend! Whether you're tuning in on Zoom or joining us in person, we look forward to growing together in faith.



Join us for coffee fellowship after morning worship! If you would like to sign up to provide coffee fellowship (most Sundays) after worship there is a sign up sheet in fellowship hall, or contact the church office.



Ushers: We are building a new Ushers List. If you previously served as usher and would like to serve again, we would like to add you to the new ushers list. Previously ushers served for an entire month. Ushers now will serve when they are available to serve even for a single Sunday. You can let Larry Grosenbach know you will serve as usher or email <u>ushers@zionperu.org</u> to be added to the ushers list.



Evangelism: We are updating our visitor information about Zion church and will be creating a visitor packet that will contain our new updated information about Zion Church and a thank you gift or two for them visiting. If you would like to help the Evangelism Team with the visitor project you can let Pastor Alex, Jerry Koehler or email <u>evangelism@zionperu.org</u>.

Pastor Alex will be on vacation beginning December 26 and will be back in the office January 2.

Rev. Kay Harding will preach on Dec. 29 and will be available for emergencies. Her phone number is: (815)993-9220





The Annual Meeting will be held on Sunday, January 26th after worship. If you have a report, please turn it into the office by Friday, January 17th.

2025 Offerings and Offering Envelopes

2025 Offering envelopes will be available in the narthex in December. Please continue to use your 2024 envelopes, sending your donations, or giving online as you have been doing. Any donations given until December 31, 2024 will be credited to 2024 giving statements. After January 1, 2025 donations will be credited to 2025 giving statements. If you have not been able to pick up your 2025 envelopes, use any envelope and put your name and date on it when you donate your contribution. Your envelope number will be the same as you have this year. If you have leftover 2024 envelopes, you can use one of those and write the 2025 date on it. If you are giving for more than one week, you do not have to use a separate envelope (or a separate check) for each week. You can mark the envelope for the weeks that are covered in it. Zion Church again thanks you for your continued support during these hard times. Your generosity has been a blessing for the continued operation and mission of Zion.

Souper Bowl Sunday" will run Jan. 26th – Feb. 9th. Everyone is asked to bring cans of soup



to worship and use them to vote for the team they think will win the Super Bowl, or the team they hope will win. The Sunday after the game, those who voted for the losing team are asked to bring one can of soup for every losing vote they cast. Jim Greening also says those who voted for the winning team should bring more soup to celebrate their team's victory. All the soup will be given to the Food Pantry. So who are you going to vote for?



ILLINOIS VALLEY PUBLIC ACTION TO DELIVER SHELTER Established 1991

HELP FEED THE HUNGRY!

Each month, Zion UCC delivers a hot, nutritious meal to the Peru PADS homeless shelter, supporting those in need in our community. With the increased demand, the shelter reopened earlier this year, and your help is essential to continue this ministry through May.

We invite you to make a difference by donating. Every contribution, big or small, helps us provide a hearty, healthy meal to those who need it most. To give, please write a check to the church with "PADS Meals" in the memo or donate online through the Giving page on our website.

Thank you for opening your hearts to this mission of compassion and care!

Hope House Donations

Savanna Rietgraf is currently interning at a halfway house in Iowa that provides transitional housing and support services for men coming out of prison or jail. Many of the residents at this halfway house, known as Hope House, arrive with few personal belongings and are in need of basic necessities like clothing as they work to get back on their feet.

Savanna is asking our church family and friends to consider donating any gently used men's clothing that you or someone you know may be able to provide. The residents of Hope House range in age from 18 to 70+, so all sizes and styles of men's clothing would be greatly appreciated - everything from casual shirts and pants to professional attire for job interviews.

These donations can make a big difference for the men at Hope House as they work to reintegrate into the community and become productive members of society. If you have items you'd like to contribute, please bring them to the church office or contact Jim Greening. Thank you in advance for your generosity in supporting this important cause.

THE CHURCH IS OPEN FOR SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP

Please follow all safety guidelines when in attendance. We understand if you are not comfortable coming in person and invite you to watch services on YouTube.

JOIN US LIVE ON YOUTUBE SUNDAYS AT 10:15

HOW DO YOU GET THERE? EASY......

1) Go to Youtube.com

- 2) Click on "Search" box at top of the page.
- 3) Type in "Zion UCC Peru Illinois"
- 4) Click on the big purple circle with a "Z" in it.
- 5) Click on the video that says "LIVE"

THAT'S IT! SEE YOU SUNDAY!

*Bulletins available to view on our website!

You can donate to Zion Church with a credit card or by bank transfer from your bank account. All you need to do is go to our web page and click "Donate" located on the right-hand side. Also, here's the link to give to our church:

https://zionuccperu.breezechms.com/

<u>You can also donate to Zion Church by Text to (815)-393-1954</u>: Enter the amount you want to give to Zion in the Text box and send. If it the first time you are giving by text you will be prompted to set up your giving method. <u>Thank you for giving during these difficult times</u>

Support Needed for Food Pantry Expansion!

The Illinois Valley Food Pantry is seeking donations as it searches for a new, larger facility to better serve those in need. A larger space will allow for the storage of additional perishable and nonperishable food items, ensuring that we can meet the increasing demand in our community.

Your financial support can make a real difference! Contributions can be sent to:

Illinois Valley Food Pantry 122 Wright St. LaSalle, IL 61301

Together, we can work to end hunger in our community. Thank you for your generosity!



Live Life (Pre and Post Transplant Support Group) meets the second Monday of each month at 6:30pm at Zion UCC.

The Compassionate Friends Group meets at Zion every fourth Thursday at 6:30pm. This meeting is open to any parent who has lost a child. Please contact the church office for information.

Weight Watchers meets every Saturday morning at 8:00. We're happy to provide space for this worthwhile service to our community.









3. Alice Tostovarsnik Arnie Watkins Savanna Rietgraf Abigale Baker Aiden Grove



5. Andrew Merkel
 7. John Eustis

4. Alton Beck

- 8. Roger Rynke Lena Claire Trumpinski
- 11. Marissa Becker
- 14. Holly Antkowiak Jack Fetzer
- 20. Joanne Bejster Noah Martinez
- 22. Abigail Mize
- 26. Brian Donahue
- 29. Bill Grosenbach
- Matthew Jacobson
- 30. Jim Greening
- 31. Sheryl Churney

December Anniversaries

4. Dave and Debra Baltikauski 29. Jim and Barbara Ryba



THE BABY JESUS STARTS TEETHING



January Birthdays

- 3.Wesley Gardner
- 6. Terri Kelly
 - Pam Coffey
- 9. Lois Wilmot Jerrid Ware Kemper Kupperschmid
- 16. Katherine Wilmot
- 18. Mary Damer
- 19. Reese Baltikauski Carol Theisinger
- 20. Douglas Johnson Duston Ploch Nikki Pacione Lynn Keyt
- 21. Savana Miller Cyndi Thurman
- 26. Sue Johnson
- 31. Abigail Coutre'

January Anniversaries

6. Matt & Hannah Sprong9. Alan & Michelle Fupler15. Bill and Terri Kelly

THE FAMILY CIRCUS



'Oh, boy! Does this mean we don't have to be good anymore?"





Secember 2024

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1. 8:25 Pastor Alex WLPO 9:00 CREW 9:30 Choir practice 10:15 Worship- Also available on You Tube Advent Begins	2. 6:00pm Renewal Leadership Team meeting (Rescheduled from 11/25/24/)	3. 6:30pm Bible Study	4. 6:30 Choir practice	5.	6	7 8:00am Weight Watchers meeting
8. 8:25 Pastor Alex WLPO 9:00 CREW 9:30 Choir practice 10:15 Worship- Also available on You Tube & Coffee Fellowship *Arrange tables for Cookie Sale*	9 6:30pm Live Life Group meeting	10 6:30pm Bible Study	116:30 Choir practice6-7:30pmCookie Dropoff	12 *Door opens at 7:00am for Cookie Drop-off 9:00am Packaging & Pricing for Cookie Sale	13 3:00pm Cookie Sale *worker "Elves" meet at 2:30pm	14 8:00am Weight Watchers meeting
 15. 8:25 Pastor Alex WLPO 9:00 CREW 9:30 Choir practice 10:15 Worship- Also available on You Tube & Coffee Fellowship 	16 7:00pm Church Council Meeting	17 6:30pm Bible Study	18 6:30 Choir practice	19 6:00 Zion Diners Christmas Party	20	21 8:00am Weight Watchers meeting
 22. 8:25 Pastor Alex WLPO 9:00 CREW 9:30 Choir practice 10:15 Worship- Also available on You Tube Children's Program & Coffee Fellowship 	23	24 5:15 PADS Meal <i>Christmas</i> <i>Eve</i> 7:00pm Candlelight Service *Also on You Tube	25	26 Pastor Alex on vacation 6:30pm Compassionate Friends Group meeting	27	28 8:00am Weight Watchers meeting
29. 8:25 Pastor Alex WLPO 9:30 Choir practice 10:15 Worship- Also available on You Tube	30.	31. New Year's Eve		h Christmas with h, rather than a la		

January 2025								
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19. 8:25 Pastor Alex WLPO 9:00 CREW 9:30 Choir practice 10:15 Worship- Also available on You Tube &Coffee Fellowship	20 7:00pm Church Council Meeting <i>Martin</i> <i>Luther</i> <i>King, Jr.</i> <i>Day</i>	21 6:30pm Bible Study	22 6:30 Choir practice	23 6:30pm Compassionate Friends Group meeting	24 Newsletter info Due	25 8:00am Weight Watchers meeting		
26. 8:25 Pastor Alex WLPO 9:00 CREW 9:30 Choir practice 10:15 Worship- Also available on You Tube Annual Meeting	27. 6:00pm Renewal Leadership Team meeting	28. 6:30pm Bible Study PADS Meal	29. 6:30 Choir practice	30.	31	Feb. 1 8:00am Weight Watchers meeting		

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come" **2 Corinthians 5:17**

