

NOVEMBER 2025 NEWSLETTER

PUBLISHED BY: ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST, PERU ALEX GARNCARZ, PASTOR

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Dear Zion Church Family and Friends,

November is here — a season of crisp mornings, falling leaves, and grateful hearts. As we turn the calendar toward Thanksgiving, I've been thinking about how much we have to be thankful for as a church family.

First and foremost, I give thanks for you — for your faithfulness, your generosity, and the ways you show up for one another and for our community. Every week, I see God's love in your actions, words, and spirit. It's a gift to be your pastor.

Our Tuesday night Bible Study continues to be a life-giving part of the week. The conversations are rich, the questions are honest, and the fellowship is great. There's something sacred about gathering and discovering fresh insights together. If you've been thinking about joining, now is a great time — there's always room at the table. You can join in person or on Zoom.

On a personal note, Shelly and I celebrated our 10th wedding anniversary, and I'm filled with gratitude for the love we share, and for all the ways you've supported and encouraged us through the years. We are thankful to be part of this family.

Looking ahead, our calendar is full — and our hearts will be, too.

We're preparing again for our Community Thanksgiving Meal, a cherished tradition where we open our doors and offer a warm, welcoming table to anyone to join us for a holiday meal. It's one of the ways Zion lives out the spirit of gratitude and hospitality, and I'm so thankful for the volunteers who make it happen.

Harvest Home Sunday is coming soon — a time to give thanks for God's provision and reflect on the harvest of blessings we've received. It's always a joyful Sunday, filled with thankfulness and generosity.

And then — Advent and Christmas are just around the corner! Soon, we'll be lighting candles, singing familiar carols, and preparing our hearts once again for the coming of Christ. It's a beautiful, holy season — but also a busy one! So I encourage you now, before it all starts, to take a breath and center yourself in the spirit of Thanksgiving.

As we step into this season together, may we each pause long enough to name our blessings. May we remember that even during life's busyness, challenges, and uncertainty — God is faithful. May our lives overflow with gratitude not just in November, but always.

With a thankful heart,

Pastor Alex





ZION UCC
Loving God, Loving People

In Need of Ongoing Prayer:

Steve Theisinger, Dave Wagner Family, Shelly, Mary Thies, Kittilson Family, Debbie, Ristau Family, Family of Gene, Joshua Ellis Family, Mary Jean, Dina, Mack McQueen Family, Gina, Sam & Kathy Cull, Kevin Kramer, The Country, George, Bonnie, Lenkaitis Family, Theresa Grove, Dixie, Lauren, Arnie & Jan Watkins, Dawn & Ron Narczewski, Jean Mikus, Deb Cooper, Ryan, Cindy Harzheim, Paul Lewis, Marilyn Haslam, Bob & Holly Antkowiak.



Prayer Requests In the Bulletin We are grateful for the privilege of praying for one another. To help us keep our prayer list current, each new request will be included in the bulletin for four weeks. After that time, we will remove it unless we are asked to continue sharing it longer. If you would like a request to remain, please let us know—we want to walk alongside you in prayer for as long as you need.



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.



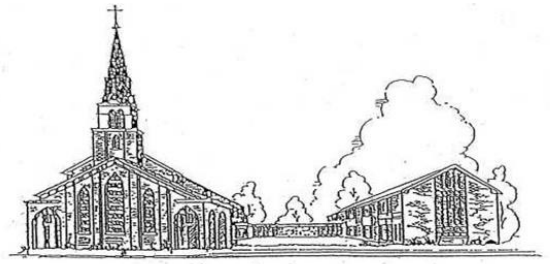
A huge thank you to all of you who showed up on Grubby Sunday and rolled up your sleeves and did a fantastic job of cleaning our beloved Zion church. It was absolutely exciting to see you all pitching in and working side by side, young and old. And everyone worked with joy. That was a big job, but with so many willing hands, you got it all done in record time. And, I don't know what you thought, but I think you should be very proud of yourselves. Let's do this again sometime!!

"You cannot get through a single day without having an impact on the world around you. What you do makes a difference, and you have to decide what kind of difference you want to make". -Jane Goodall



All praise be yours, my Lord
Through all that you have made,
And first my lord Brother Sun,
Who brings the day; and light

You give to us through him. -St. Francis of Assisi



Zion United Church of Christ

"The Church with the Carillon Tower Chimes"



Join the **CREW**!

Our Sunday School program, **CREW**, is meeting again every Sunday at 9:00 AM. Kids in kindergarten through 5th grade are invited to join us for stories, games, crafts, and activities that help build faith and friendships. We're excited to see you this Sunday!



Join Us for Bible Study!

Bible Study is underway Tuesdays at 6:30PM! Our study is based on the inspiring series *The Chosen* and is open to all adults.

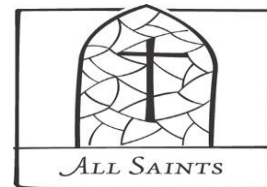
This is a hybrid event, so you can join us in person at the church or via Zoom—whichever works best for you. We are currently discussing Season 3, so come ready to share your thoughts, questions, and insights.

Let's continue to grow in faith and community together. See you Tuesday! All are welcome!

More news about The Chosen Bible Study: There are good reviews of the first two seasons on YouTube. They are The Chosen RECAP: Season 1 www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FtuFaPonTQ which is 12 min. long and The Chosen RECAP: Season 2 www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOMOhuz7PT8 which is 8 min. long. Both are worth watching. If you were part of the study group last year they will refresh your memory and if you are new to the group they will give you a good sense of what has been discussed so you will feel "at home" joining now. You can participate in person at the church or online.



All Saints Day is Saturday, November 1st



Sunday morning worship will be at Pilgrim Park on November 2nd.

Anyone who would like to carpool can meet at the church at 10:00am. **Our service will begin at 11:15am.** If you need a ride, please let Pastor Alex know. We'll have lunch and fellowship after the service. If you have not signed up, please call Pastor Alex so that he can let Pilgrim Park staff know how many are coming and how much food to prepare. If you haven't worshipped at Pilgrim Park with us before, please join us. It's an amazing place to enjoy nature.

Pastor Alex will be on vacation beginning November 3 and will be back in the office November 9.

Rev. Kay Harding will preach on Nov. 9 and will be available for emergencies. Her phone number is: (815)993-9220



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



Join us for coffee fellowship after 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.

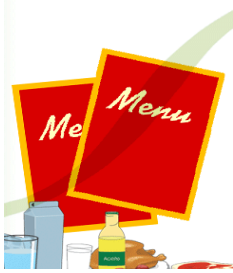


The Women's Guild The Guild will meet on Thursday, November 6th at 1:00pm in the Fellowship Hall. All ladies are welcome to attend.

Our wreaths and Garland have seen better days. The Women's Guild would like to replace them. If you would like to help beautify our church you may donate for it. You can give money to Phyllis or just put it in offering marked for decorations. Thank you.



VETERANS DAY IS TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 11TH
THANK YOU TO ALL VETERANS FOR YOUR SERVICE



Zion Diners met Thursday, October 16th at The Blue Margarita in Oglesby. Candie Zelenak hosted and everyone had a great time. Next Diners will be Thursday, November 20th at 6:00pm. Alice and Dick Tostovarsnik will be hosting. The restaurant will be announced. All are welcome! 12/19

CAN YOU HELP?-We're preparing for our community-wide Free Thanksgiving Dinner and need a team of helping hands to make it happen! This is a **preliminary sign-up** so we can confirm we have enough volunteers to make it happen.

Ways to help (pick one or more):

- Food prep & cooking (Thanksgiving week and Day)
- Baking pies/desserts (at home or in the church kitchen)
- Set-up & decorating (fellowship hall/table settings)
- Serving & hospitality (greeting, hosting, refills)
- Dishwashing & clean-up

A sign-up sheet will be available at worship this Morning. Questions or early interest? See Pastor Alex.
Let's bless our neighbors together—thank you for serving!



COME, YE THANKFUL PEOPLE COME.
RAISE THE SONG OF HARVEST HOME!



Harvest Home Sunday is November 23rd. You will be able to celebrate your thankfulness to God and help support the Illinois Valley Food Pantry at Zion's annual celebration. This is a great way to get into the Thanksgiving spirit. If you would like Jim to do your food pantry gift shopping, please contact Jim Greening or the church office as soon as possible.



We will take an extra collection for turkeys. It is always amazing how generous Zion members and friends are to the food pantry. Thank you in advance for your tremendous support for the food pantry. Decorating the sanctuary for Harvest Home will take place on Thursday, November 20th starting at 3:30. It usually takes about an hour. Everyone is welcome to help. We need pumpkins, gourds, etcetera, for the decorating. Please have them at the church by Tuesday November 18th. What better way is it to thank God for all our blessings than to share them with others.

Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service—Join us for a community Ecumenical Thanksgiving Eve Service on Wednesday, November 26 at 6:30 p.m. at Cherry United Church of Christ. This special service is an opportunity to gather with friends and neighbors from several area churches to give thanks together for God's blessings. Pastor Alex will bring the evening message. All are welcome—come with a grateful heart and join us in worship and fellowship!

PLEASE JOIN US FOR THANKSGIVING AT ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST!

****Join Us for Our 7th Annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner!****

This Thanksgiving, we're once again opening our doors and inviting everyone to share a meal, warmth, and connection. Whether you're in need of a meal or simply want to enjoy good company, we'd love to have you. We'll be serving a traditional Thanksgiving feast with turkey and all the fixings, completely free of charge. Whether you're coming alone or with family and friends, there's always room for more around our table. Contributions to help cover costs are welcome, but not required.

****Doors open at 11:30 AM****, and we'll serve approximately from noon until 2:00 PM. Afterward, you can stick around to watch football, or to enjoy some good conversation. If you plan to attend or would like to volunteer, please sign up as soon as possible. The sign-up sheets are located in the narthex and Fellowship Hall after service. Thank you in advance to all volunteers.

We look forward to sharing this special day with you!





Advent begins on November 30th this year. Join us on Sundays as we prepare our hearts and lives to celebrate the birth of Jesus.



This Christmas, Zion UCC will be collecting and providing gifts for a local family in need. There are four children, and we invite you to help make their holiday bright!

Gift ideas include:

- **6-year-old girl:** size 8/10 clothes, size 12 shoes — loves Lilo & Stitch, coloring, Squishmallows, and princess dolls
- **5-year-old boy:** size 5T–6 clothes, size 11 shoes — loves Paw Patrol, Minecraft, and monster trucks
- **3-year-old boy:** size 4T–5T clothes, size 10 shoes — loves Bluey, PJ Masks, Spider-Man, and toy cars
- **Toddler girl:** size 2T clothes, size 7 shoes — loves Ms. Rachel, building blocks, and Blue's Clues
- The family also needs **new sheet sets** for: 1 full-sized bed, 2 twin beds, and 1 toddler/crib bed

Please consider choosing an item or two to donate. You can bring unwrapped gifts to the church. Let's share the God's love through generosity and kindness this Christmas season! For questions or more details, see Pastor Alex.



The Illinois Valley Flute Ensemble Winter Concert will take place at Zion on Sunday, December 7th at 2:00pm. Details to come!



FOR A SUCCESSFUL COOKIE (AND MORE) SALE

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 12th



HERE IS WHAT WE NEED:

COOKIES OF ALL KINDS

Especially Springerles, Almond Stars, Butter Spritz,

Lebkuchen, Pfeffernusse and Cinnamon Stars



Also appreciated: Holiday Breads and Pastries, Pies, and Candies.



*Please have all baked goods at Zion by 9:00AM Thursday, Dec. 11

Please label all items with name of cookie, kind of pie or pastry, or candy.

Please also indicate with or without nuts.

We hope you are thinking ahead and including time to help with the Cookie Sale on your calendars. To help with that we've made the sign-up sheets for the December 12th COOKIE SALE available now. They are currently in the Fellowship Hall. Take a look at them and see what things you might be able to help with. If you know what you plan to do sign-up now. If you need to check your personal calendar, do that and sign up over the coming weeks. Here's a summary of what to sign up for:

- Baking: Cookies of all kinds, Holiday Breads, Coffee Cakes, Pies, and Candies
- Arranging tables and chairs in fellowship hall after worship **Sunday, Dec. 7th**
- Sorting, packaging & pricing items starting at 9 a.m. on **Thursday, Dec. 11th**
- Helping with the sale starting at 2:30 till about 6 on **Friday, Dec. 12th**. If you can't come at 2:30, come at about 5:30 to help rearrange the fellowship hall.



Thank you in advance to everyone who helps make this sale a success. Sign-up sheets are available at church or call the church office. And let's not forget **THE PURPOSE OF THE COOKIE SALE**: The money raised helps with maintenance and improvements around the church, helps send kids to camp at Pilgrim Park, and is used to make donations to community service organizations. The Women's Guild organizes the sale and disperses the funds, but we rely on the whole congregation to make it happen.



Feeding the Future – The Illinois Valley Food Pantry launched a major fundraiser to fund their new building purchase, necessary renovations, and expanded food programs —so that we can continue to serve the growing number of individuals and families in need across our region. Local individuals, churches and businesses are joining together to make this vision a reality. Learn more or donate at www.ivfoodpantry.com or by contacting the Pantry directly.



Zion Spaghetti Express-Save the Date! On Wednesday, February 19, 2026 we'll be hosting a Drive-Through Spaghetti Dinner. This is a wonderful opportunity to enjoy a delicious meal while supporting our church community.

We'll need plenty of hands to make this event a success—help will be needed to prepare the food, serve meals, and clean up afterward. More details will be shared soon, so stay tuned!



ILLINOIS VALLEY PUBLIC ACTION TO
DELIVER SHELTER
Established 1991

****HELP FEED THE HUNGRY!****

Zion UCC is once again providing a delicious hot meal delivered to the **Peru PADS homeless shelter** each month. As the summer winds down, the shelter reopened earlier this year due to a greater need than ever. Every little bit helps us provide a nutritious meal each month through May. Write a check to the church and note **"PADS Meals."** Or go online and donate through the Giving page on our website. Your donation helps provide a healthy, hearty meal to those who need it most. Thank you for your generosity and support in feeding the hungry!

How You Can Help:Donate: Every gift—big or small—ensures that we continue providing hearty, healthy meals.

Ways to Give: Write a check to the church with "PADS Meals" in the memo or donate online through the Giving page on our website.



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

ushers@zionperu.org 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 evangelism@zionperu.org.

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/>

You can also donate to Zion Church by Text to (815)-393-1954 : 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. *Thank you for giving during these difficult times*



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

COMMUNITY
PROGRAMS

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.

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



November Birthdays

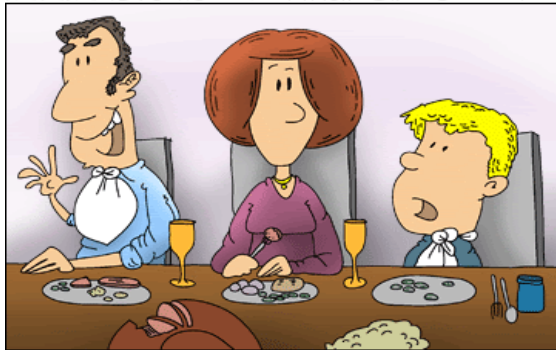
1. Reid Baltikauski
Charles Lindenmeyer
4. Ellyn Hylla
7. Elinor Lindenmeyer
14. Brian Butkus
15. Taeden Freschi
16. Mary Thies
- Austyn Sprong
18. Kevin Rynke
21. Sophie Bergagna
22. Jacob Miller
23. Katherine Nardulli
25. Beverly Keutzer
26. Hanna Sprong
27. Zach Freschi
Adaline Grove
28. Lauren Dergance
29. Evelyn Jayne Lindenmier
30. Caidin Garncarz



November Anniversaries

10. Arnie and Janis Watkins
26. Roger and Lori Rynke

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11-19-2012

I WOULD BE ABLE TO GIVE A LOT MORE
THANKS IF I DIDN'T HAVE TO FINISH OFF
THESE LIMA BEANS



December Birthdays

3. Alice Tostovarsnik
Arnie Watkins
Savanna Rietgraf
Abigale Baker
Aiden Grove
4. Alton Beck
Theresa Grove
5. Andrew Merkel
7. John Eustis
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

*Twenty years from now you will be more
disappointed by the things you didn't do
than by the ones you did.*

-Mark Twain

November 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 8:00am Weight Watchers meeting
2. 8:25 Pastor Alex WLPO 11:15 Worship- & Lunch at Pilgrim Park	3 Pastor Alex on Vacation	4 6:30pm Bible Study	5 6:30 Choir practice	6 1:00pm Zion Women's Guild Meeting	7	8 8:00am Weight Watchers meeting
9. 8:25 Pastor Alex WLPO 9:00 CREW 9:30 Choir practice 10:15 Worship- Also available on You Tube & Coffee Fellowship	10 6:30pm Live Life Group meeting Pastor Alex Back	11 6:30pm Bible Study Veterans Day	12 6:30 Choir practice	13	14	15 8:00am Weight Watchers meeting
16. 8:25 Pastor Alex WLPO 9:00 CREW 9:30 Choir practice 10:15 Worship- Also available on You Tube & Coffee Fellowship	17 7:00pm Church Council Meeting	18 6:30pm Bible Study	19 6:30 Choir practice	20 3:30 Decorate for Harvest Home 6:00 Zion Diners	21 Newsletter info Due	22 8:00am Weight Watchers meeting
23. 8:25 Pastor Alex WLPO 9:00 CREW 9:30 Choir practice 10:15 Worship- Also available on You Tube & Coffee Fellowship HARVEST HOME SUNDAY	24. 6:00pm Renewal Leadership Team meeting	25. 6:30pm Bible Study PADS Meal	26. 6:30pm Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service at Cherry UCC	27. Thanksgiving Day Dinner at Zion Doors open 11:30am	28	29 8:00am Weight Watchers meeting
30 8:25 Pastor Alex WLPO 9:00 CREW 9:30 Choir practice 10:15 Worship- Also available on You Tube Advent 1	Dec. 1	Dec. 2 6:30pm Bible Study	Dec. 3 6:30 Choir practice	Dec. 4 1:00pm Zion Women's Guild Meeting	Dec. 5	Dec. 6 8:00am Weight Watchers meeting