

## **OCTOBER 2025 NEWSLETTER**

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

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Dear Zion Church Family and Friends,

It's hard to believe we've turned the calendar to October! With the changing leaves comes a new season in the life of our church. Let me begin by sharing a few updates:

- Our Tuesday evening Bible Study is off to a wonderful start. Each week we gather to share insights, and grow deeper in faith and community. If you haven't joined us yet, you're always welcome to pull up a chair or log on.
- I continue to serve on the Board of Directors for the Illinois Valley Food Pantry, and I'm excited to share that the Pantry has officially moved into its new home on Progress Boulevard in Peru. I share this not only as a board member, but as your pastor — because Zion UCC has been a faithful supporter of the pantry since its very beginning, and your generosity continues to make a real difference in our community.
- Sadly, our local PADS homeless shelter is busier than ever, with upwards of 50 residents most days. Zion continues to provide a meal once a month, and I'm grateful for all who help with this important work.
- Our radio show on WLPO continues to reach people throughout the Illinois Valley. I've heard from many folks in the community who appreciate the messages shared each week. It's a unique and meaningful way for Zion to minister beyond our walls.
- Looking ahead, we've got Grubby Sunday coming up — an all-church fall cleanup day. It will be a fun and productive time to work side by side, caring for our building and grounds together and helping Marty with some of that extra stuff.
- Memorial Sunday will be observed on October 26, as we remember members of the Zion family — and their loved ones — who have died in the past year. It is always a sacred and meaningful time of remembrance.
- We will also soon begin Confirmation with a brand new approach. I'm looking forward to walking with our young people as they explore their faith, ask questions, and take this next step on their spiritual journey.

It's a busy time of year — and Thanksgiving is just around the corner — but I want to take the bulk of this letter to reflect on something important, some reflection on my sabbatical. As you know, I recently returned from a three-month sabbatical that ended on August 31. I can honestly say it was a season of rest, renewal, and learning.

I began with a silent retreat at the Siena Retreat Center in Wisconsin. The silence gave space for things to rise to the surface — things I often bury under the noise and busyness of daily life. I found myself re-centering in God's presence in a way I didn't know I needed. I also took a "praycation" at Pilgrim Park, walking the trails, meditating, praying, and simply breathing deeply again. These were days of restoration, reminding me that I can't just pour out — I also need to be filled.

A major part of the sabbatical was also dedicated to reading, reflection, and discernment about the future of my ministry and Zion's ministry. I am a strong believer in continuing education, and this summer I completed

10 of 12 online courses toward a Ministry Certificate with Seminary Now. Courses like *What Is the Church, Why Does It Still Matter?*, *Empowering Women in Ministry*, *Glorifying God in a Diverse World*, and *Rediscipling the White Church* challenged me, inspired me, and gave me fresh insight for ministry.

Spiritually, I reconnected with God in ways I didn't even realize I needed. I had some very candid conversations with important people in my life — and those conversations were healing gifts.

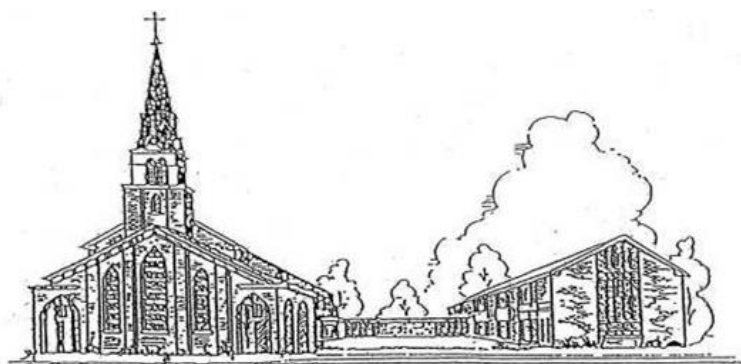
I'm also incredibly grateful for the way our church leadership stepped up while I was away. People were cared for. Discipleship continued. Worship was offered. The church functioned well and thrived. I know some of you now have a new appreciation for the behind the scenes pastoral work that happens week by week.

So as I return, I'm holding two truths: 1)The church did just fine without me. 2)My calling, presence, and gifts still matter.

That's a humbling place to stand — and a freeing one. My hope going forward is that we continue to embrace a shared ministry, where pastor and people walk together, leaning on the God who never takes a sabbatical. I return with a renewed commitment: to guarding my time off and time with family, to daily quiet time for meditation and reflection, to moving this congregation into conversation about officially becoming Open & Affirming, to improving Confirmation and pastoral care, especially for our shut-ins, and to deepening our sense of covenant with the wider church.

I return rested, challenged, and grateful — and excited for what's ahead. This sabbatical was long overdue and incredibly important. But as good as it was to be away... it's even better to be back. I can't wait to see what God has in store for us! I love you all.

To God be the glory,  
Pastor Alex



Zion United Church of Christ

*"The Church with the Carillon Tower Chimes"*



**ZION UCC**

Loving God, Loving People



Zion UCC Church Council Meeting

Sept. 15, 2025 7:00pm

Members present: Pastor Alex, Marty Johnson, Jerry Koehler, Dinelle Freschi, Elecia Lindenmier, Alice Tostovarsnik, Jyll Janz, Lori Rynke, Phyllis Bender

Call to Order: Pastor Alex  
Opening Prayer: Jerry K.

Last month's minutes: Motion to approve by Jerry K. seconded by Phyllis B.

Treasurer's report: Motion to approve by Jyll J. seconded by Alice T.

Christian Education: Lock-in went well at Pilgrim Park. Good Fellowship/Family time. 21 Attendees. Rally Day 9/14- Sunday School off to a good start.

Evangelism: Dinelle just mailed out this month's cards to children.

Stewardship: Summer offerings were up- Good attendance in Pastor Alex's absence.

Pastoral Care: For future need- put people on one month time on prayer request list, unless ongoing.

Missions: PADS started up early – at the end of August. I.V. Food Pantry officially opened at new address.

Building and Grounds: Troy began working on roof again. Plan is to have roof done by the end of the week. Check Uline on two new dispensers once leaf paper towels are gone.

Women's Guild: Cookie Sale discussed – want to encourage younger adults to help more. Possible spaghetti dinner.

Renewal Leadership Team: T-PERK event coming up- need to schedule a meeting.

Minister's report (see report)

Jyll J. made a motion to adjourn meeting.  
Lord's Prayer led by Pastor Alex

Respectfully submitted by Marty J.

*In Need of Ongoing Prayer:*

Dina, Gene, Mack McQueen family, Gina, Sam & Kathy Cull, Mary Jean, 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.

**The Altar Flowers and Bulletin Sponsorship** September 7 were In Memory of our parents Rev. Philip & Peggy Krause on their 79<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, from Kathy Krause Learn, Kim Krause Clements, and Carol Krause.

**A Memorial** in Loving Memory of David Splittstoesser was given by Georgia Splittstoesser.

*For all who seek to live and grow,  
to search and find, to ask and know;  
unfolding journey, never done:  
we sing your glory, Holy One!*  
-a doxology by Mary Luti, in *Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow*



**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.



### Illinois Valley CROP Walk Against Hunger

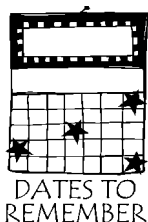
We had wonderful weather for the CROP Walk this year. We will post donation totals as they become available. Thanks to walkers and sponsors!



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** met Thursday, October 2<sup>nd</sup> at 1:00pm in the Fellowship Hall. In November, the Guild will meet on Thursday, November 6<sup>th</sup> at 1:00pm in the Fellowship Hall. All ladies are welcome to attend.

**WORLD  
COMMUNION  
SUNDAY** October 5<sup>th</sup> is World Communion Sunday



**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](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FtuFaPonTQ) which is 12 min. long and The Chosen RECAP: Season 2 [www.youtube.com/watch?v=pOMOhuz7PT8](https://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. The online sign in is available on the church website.



**Choir practice** is underway Wednesdays at 6:30 pm. If you like to sing and have fun please contact Jim Greening (815/223-1858) with questions, or come to practice.

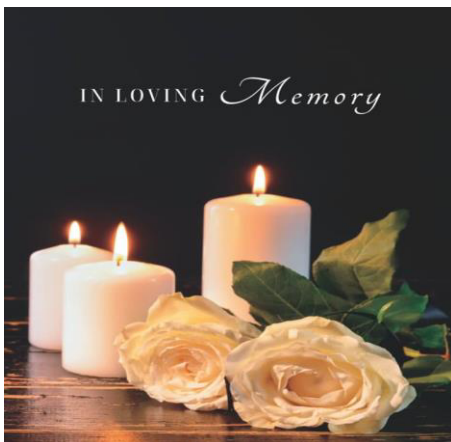


**Zion Diners** met Sept. 18 at Angelo's in Spring Valley with Jyll as host. Next Diners will be Thursday, Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm. Candie is host and will let us know the place she chooses. Come join the fun.

**Grubby Sunday – October 19** Mark your calendars for Grubby Sunday on October 19! On this special day, we invite everyone to come to worship dressed in their grubby cleanup clothes. We'll have a shortened worship service, and then roll up our sleeves together for some extra cleaning around the sanctuary and fellowship hall.

This is a whole-church event—all ages are welcome to help out! After we finish working together, we'll share a light lunch and enjoy some fellowship.

Let's join hands to care for our church home and one another. Come ready to worship, work, and share in community!



*Memorial Sunday, when we will remember members of our family of faith who have died during the past year, will take place on October 26<sup>th</sup>.*

*William J. Vlastník  
Rebecca "Becky" Jacobson  
James "Rusty" Thies  
Thomas W. Kaszynski*

*We share in this time  
of grief but also in the  
memories of your loved  
one.*





**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](http://www.ivfoodpantry.com) or by contacting the Pantry directly.



### **Renewal Leadership Team Meeting**

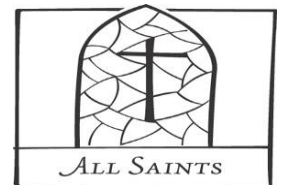
The Renewal Leadership Team will gather on Monday, October 27 at 6:00 p.m. If you would like to be part of this team, we encourage you to join us that evening. Everyone is welcome—your presence and ideas will be a valuable part of our work together.



**The Illinois Valley Flute Ensemble** will present a Halloween concert on October 30<sup>th</sup> at 7:00PM in the sanctuary of Zion UCC. Please come and join us and enjoy a “flutey” Halloween with HAUNTINGLY beautiful music. It will be open to the public with free will donation.



**All Saints Day is Saturday, November 1<sup>st</sup>**



**Sunday morning worship will be at Pilgrim Park on November 2<sup>nd</sup>.**

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. There will be a sign up sheet available soon in the Narthex, or contact the church office. Please sign up so that we 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.



## LOOKING FORWARD TO THE DECEMBER 12<sup>th</sup> CHRISTMAS COOKIE (AND MORE) SALE

Christmas decorations are beginning to make their appearances in stores. That's a pretty good indicator that we had better be making plans for the annual Cookie Sale. There are a few things that we'd like to let know well in advance so that you can plan accordingly.

**FIRST, THE PURPOSE OF THE COOKIE SALE:** The money raised from this sale helps both our congregation and the community. Some of the money helps with maintenance and improvements around the church, in the past, for example, replacing the elevator, redoing the roof on the education wing, the annual cleaning of the Fellowship Hall carpet. Funds are also used to help send kids to camp at Pilgrim Park every year. Annual donations are made to community organizations:

Illinois Valley CROP Walk, Starved Rock Regional Center for Child Development, Illinois Valley Food Pantry, United Way, Horizon House, The Red Cross, Lighted Way, Pilgrim Park, North Central Youth Services, Human Needs, Harvest Home, and PADS.

The Women's Guild organizes the sale and disperses the funds, but we rely on the whole congregation to make it happen.

### SOME DATES TO REMEMBER:

The sale will be **December 12**. Please mark your calendars now. We will be asking for people to sign up to help with the sale beginning in late October.

But a lot of work will be done **December 11**, the day before the sale. The cookies and other items will be priced, wrapped, put in boxes, the tables laid out with sale items, and weighing and check out stations set up that day. We will need lots of help. Again we will be asking people to sign up to help with this beginning in late October.

Sunday, **December 7**, after church we will need help moving tables and chairs into position for the sale.



**Regarding the "AND MORE"** in the heading of this article. During the pandemic we had people preorder cookies and we packaged the orders for people to pick up. To accomplish this we needed to offer a limited variety of cookies, and no other baked goods. But before the pandemic we also sold **breads, pies, coffee cakes and candies** We're bringing those back. If you would like to make some things from the "and more" category we'd love to have them.

**Regarding DECORATED CUT-OUTS, aka sugar cookies.** We don't plan on having a cookies decorating party, but Dixie Tonozzi has a great recipe for an easy glaze. We'll make that available in the Nov. Newsletter.

We'll keep you up to date and plans progress. Thanks for your interest and your support.





**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.

**HELP  
WANTED**

**Ushers**

**HELP  
WANTED**

**Evangelism**

**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](mailto: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](mailto: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.

**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.

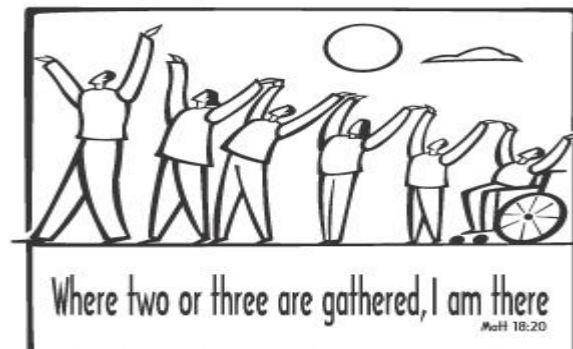
**Praying Together:**

*Without the Way, there is no going;*

*Without the Truth, there is no knowing;*

*Without the Life; there is no Living.*

-Thomas á Kempis





### October Birthdays

- 1 Mark Bejster
- 3 Leah Wilmot
5. Jyll Janz
7. Michelle Johnson  
Ryan Ploch
8. Kristen Eustis
9. Libby Mize
10. Lucy Breuning
11. Klaire Wilmot
12. Dona Ostermeyer
13. Stephanie Heilstedt  
Olivia Shetterly
16. Sharon Eustis  
Bentley Gardner
20. Lanie Lynn Gardner
- 23 Rosalie Watkins
24. David Baltikauski
- 25 Becky Wicinski  
Nathan Tipton
25. Olivia Bergagna
26. Bill Becker
27. Anna Coutre'
29. Lexanne Jarosz



### October Anniversaries

5. Dick & Alice Tostovarsnik
7. Bill & Sue Johnson
9. Jerrid & Tanya Ware
10. Pastor Alex & Shelly Garncarz
13. Dan & Sheryl Churney
15. Adam & Jennifer Mize
16. Brant and Megan Baltikauski



### 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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10-28-2011

GREAT COSTUMES ... HERE, HAVE SOME LOCUSTS

*Laughter gives us distance. It allows us to step back from an event, deal with it, and then move on.*

-Bob Newhart

# October 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 <b>6:30pm</b> Choir practice	2 <b>1:00pm</b> Zion Women's Guild Meeting	3	4 <b>8:00am</b> Weight Watchers meeting
5. <b>8:25</b> Pastor Alex WLPO <b>9:00</b> CREW <b>9:30</b> Choir practice <b>10:15</b> Worship- Also available on You Tube & Coffee Fellowship <i>World Communion Sunday</i>	6	7 <b>6:30pm</b> Bible Study	8 <b>6:30pm</b> Choir practice	9	10	11 <b>8:00am</b> Weight Watchers meeting
12. <b>8:25</b> Pastor Alex WLPO <b>9:00</b> CREW <b>9:30</b> Choir practice <b>10:15</b> Worship- Also available on You Tube & Coffee Fellowship	13 <b>6:30pm</b> Live Life Group meeting	14 <b>6:30pm</b> Bible Study	15 <b>6:30pm</b> Choir practice	16 <b>6:00</b> Zion Diners	17 Newsletter info Due	18 <b>8:00am</b> Weight Watchers meeting
19. <b>8:25</b> Pastor Alex WLPO <b>9:00</b> CREW <b>9:30</b> Choir practice <b>10:15</b> Worship- Also available on You Tube <b>Grubby Sunday/ Luncheon</b>	20 <b>7:00pm</b> Church Council Meeting	21 <b>6:30pm</b> Bible Study	22 <b>6:30pm</b> Choir practice	23 <b>6:30pm</b> Compassionate Friends Group meeting	24	25 <b>8:00am</b> Weight Watchers meeting
26. <b>8:25</b> Pastor Alex WLPO <b>9:00</b> CREW <b>9:30</b> Choir practice <b>10:15</b> Worship- Also available on You Tube & Coffee Fellowship <b>Memorial Sunday</b>	27 <b>6:00pm</b> Renewal Leadership Team Meeting	28 <b>6:30pm</b> Bible Study  PADS Meal	29 <b>6:30pm</b> Choir practice	30 <b>7:00pm</b> Halloween Flute Concert	31 	Nov. 1 <b>8:00am</b> Weight Watchers meeting  <b>ALL SAINT'S DAY</b>

***Don't forget to sign up for worship & lunch at Pilgrim Park November 2<sup>nd</sup>!***