

Zion Lutheran Church & Preschool
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Christ The King Lutheran Chapel
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December 2025

Jesse Greenhagen, Pastor

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In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying: "The voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight.' " Matthew 3:1-3

The season of Advent is a time of reflection and repentance. John the Baptist is the Church's iconic figure of repentance. He drew the people of Israel back to the Jordan waters, where they first entered the Promised Land. He reminded them of the sins of their forefathers, who complained against the LORD in the desert. They were a stiff-necked people who quickly forgot the LORD and constructed a golden calf under Aaron's supervision. John's harkening back to the waters was a reminder of the LORD's faithfulness in the midst of man's faithlessness.

John's message has not lost its sting. It is true, "[Jesus] must increase, but [John] must decrease." But just because Christ Jesus has now already come, John's message does not go away. Rather, John's message pointed to Jesus. John's message is perhaps more pertinent than ever.

The Israelites endangered themselves by forgetting the God who delivered them out of Egypt, mistaking Him for a golden calf. At the time of John, the Israelites once again forgot God, mistaking Jesus to be a blasphemer who had a demon. Today, we can forget God. As Christmas approaches, we can quickly be distracted by the hustle and bustle of shopping, gift-giving, Santa Clause, and hosting family gatherings. We collect so much junk (literally and figuratively) that we create stumbling blocks for ourselves. Rather than spending a precious hour studying the Word of God, we quickly burn an hour on our phones shopping for the perfect present for a friend. Rather than attend a mid-week Advent service, we watch College Football or a sappy

Hallmark show. The Devil is hard at work this time of year. We quickly fill our lives with entertainment, not realizing we are filling our lives with clutter.

John the Baptist's message rings true: "Prepare the way of the LORD; Make His paths straight." This Advent, let us make straight the way of the LORD. Let us intentionally clear our lives of the clutter we have accumulated and return, like the Israelites, to the waters of our baptism. For in the Jordan waters our LORD was baptized. And in our baptism, we are connected to Him. While all our sins were washed off of us in holy baptism, our sins have been taken up by Jesus in His own baptism. As we begin a new Church year, we cannot celebrate Jesus' birth without being reminded of His death. For He came into this world to die, carrying the sin of mankind with Him to the cross.

Come join us this Advent as we prepare the way of the LORD. In repentance, let us be cleared of the clutter in our lives. And having been emptied, let us be filled by His Word and Sacraments. The Kingdom of Heaven is indeed at hand.

In Christ,
Pastor Greenhagen



1st Annual Christmas Hygge

Come Join Pastor and his family around the fireplace of their home on Sunday, December 14, for appetizers and cozy drinks. They will open their doors to the congregation between 2:00 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Stop by the church office for their home address.

Early Childhood Center News



"Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." — Luke 2:10–11kjv

What joyous news the angels shared that first Christmas night! The children of Zion ECC are preparing to share that same joyous message with their families and friends. They have begun practicing songs, fingerplays, and memory verses for their Christmas services.

Four-Year-Old Preschool Class

The four-year-old class has again been invited to participate in the Zion Children's Christmas Service on **Sunday, December 14**. Please have children arrive at **9:30 a.m.** for one final joint practice. The service will begin at **11:00 a.m.** Following the service, we will enjoy a short fellowship time with a Jesus' birthday cake.

Three-Year-Old Preschool Class

The three-year-old class has begun preparing for their Children's Service, which will be held on **Wednesday, December 17 at 10:30 a.m.** Children who do not typically attend on Wednesdays are encouraged to join us for this special day. Please have children arrive at their normal time so they can participate in our final joint practice.

Parents, we will also host a short fellowship time following the service. We are looking for volunteers to provide treats and assist with setup and cleanup. A sign-up sheet is posted on the classroom bulletin board. If you are able to help, your support would be greatly appreciated!

Please also watch for classroom-specific communication from your child's teacher regarding Christmas parties. Each class celebrates on different days and in different ways. Thank you!

Christmas Break

Preschool, preschool childcare, and toddler care will enjoy Christmas break from **December 22 through January 2**. The entire center will be closed during these two weeks. We look forward to seeing everyone back on **January 5**.

Many of us were taught to pray at bedtime: "Now I lay me down to sleep . . ." with the addition of: "God bless" (mommy, daddy, and so on). It is of grave importance that a child learns early on that speaking to God (Jesus, our advocate) doesn't necessarily need to be rote or even of a formal nature. So many adults (even those who do pray) may state they don't know how to speak to Jesus outside of the Lord's Prayer. Many don't even take the time to thank their provider before a meal. All good in one's life is from God. Parents, food, friends, a puppy's kisses . . . So much in life are gifts from God and need to be recognized as such. We take so much for granted. As Paul reminds us several times in Thessalonians, we must 'pray without ceasing'. He doesn't mean to spend every waking moment in prayer, but to be prepared to bring thanks, praise and our earthly concerns before him, frequently repeating our prayers and acknowledging His presence in everything we do. A child's prayers are held especially precious in heaven. If that child continues coming to God in good times and bad his faith cannot help but increase. Help your children to understand that their Savior isn't there only in the time of trouble but wants to be spoken to as a loving friend. He appreciates being recognized as the center of one's life. Even though he knows what's in your heart, as with any good friend, he listens and cares.

Brad Coulson

Sunday School Superintendent



Children's Christmas Service

What Child is This?

Sunday, December 14

11:00 a.m. at Zion



Practices for the program will be Sunday, December 7, at 10:30 a.m. following Sunday School. (grades 1 though confirmation class) and on Sunday, December 14 at 9:45 a.m. (all participating children) until the service begins at 11:00 a.m.

NURSE'S NOTE:

With Christmas just days away, many of us are overwhelmed, anxious, depressed, grieving the loss of a loved one and the burden is extra difficult now.

There is a lot of language to sort through when you need help with a mental or relational health problem. And we should be asking for help. We all have problems. In this sinful world not one of us will escape the need for help. We confess it every Sunday in our churches:

"Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved You with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. We justly deserve Your present and eternal punishment. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in Your will and walk in Your ways to the glory of Your holy name. Amen."

Confession assumes we have need before God. Finding help for our needs, however, is often a great challenge. One of the most common questions I get asked is: "But who should I talk to?"

Pastors are a really good start, and so are deaconesses and other workers who offer spiritual care and encouragement within our congregations. Pastors and church workers want you to know, though, that they are not counselors.

Pastors are given to us to shepherd, to lead the Body, and to proclaim truth and love to us through the Word of God. This Word is highly relevant for the problems that assail us and taunt us in this broken world.

They also bring us comfort and care that we cannot receive elsewhere in the physical presence of Christ when we receive His Body and His Blood.

When we let them care for us in our time of trouble, I think the Holy Spirit opens our eyes anew to see Immanuel, God with us, in new ways, even in the rockiest of times.

This information was taken from LWML Resources. Here is the web address:

<https://resources.lcms.org/reading-study/commentaries/who-should-i-talk-to/>

I encourage you to look further into this article. Praying that we can all cheerfully celebrate the coming of our Lord this year and every year.

God Bless,

Phillis Daws RN,BSN

989-621-8583 or zionparishnurse@gmail.com



YOUTH & FAMILY LIFE

Friday, December 5 - decorate the float for Dickens Parade. We will meet at Coyne Oil, (Pickard and Crawford) in Mount Pleasant at 5:30 p.m.

Saturday, December 6 - Dickens Parade. We will meet at the Methodist Church on Main Street in Mount Pleasant at 5:30 p.m. The parade starts at 6:00 p.m. This is a family event and the more the merrier!

Sunday, December 7 - Christmas Caroling. We will meet at CTK after the 11:00 a.m. service for pizza. At 12:30 p.m. we will carpool to our friends that have requested we visit and sing carols. This is always a fun and rewarding experience.



Higher Things Youth Conference. Early registration for this year has begun. This year's conference is in St. Louis, Missouri and it fills up fast! Please contact Luke Epple, Jr., if you are interested as the price increases on February 1, 2026.

MERRY
CHRISTMAS

Zion Lutheran Women's Guild



In the Word

No more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ (Ephesians 4:31c-32 GNT).

Jen keeps a ledger - a list of payments and expenses - and makes sure that everything balances each month. She keeps another "ledger" in her heart and mind - a list of wrongs her family and friends commit against her. She makes them "pay", but this hard-hearted approach keeps Jen miserable most of the time.

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." (Matthew 18:21-22). Jesus teaches us to forgive again and again when others sin against us.

The prophet Jeremiah explained that when Jesus came then God would declare: "I will forgive their sins and I will no longer remember their wrongs" (Jeremiah 31:43b GNT). This is the way God forgives. Because Jesus took our punishment on the cross, full forgiveness is ours by faith. Now with God's help, we can strive to forgive others as He forgives us - without counting, without remembering, without resentment.

Walking with my Lord

Lord, soften my heart to forgive as You forgive. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Calendar of Events

MITES: We are always looking for loose change. We will be putting our mite box out the second Sunday of each month so that we can build up our mites. Thank you to those that contributed.



Ladies Luncheon - There is no ladies luncheon in December.

Quilts - What a Success! We sold 42 regular quilts and 2 baby quilts. This year we gave away 26 quilts to the Central Michigan University students. The remaining 43 quilts and donated clothing has been taken to Orphan Grain Train in Sebewaing, Michigan. Thank you to all who contributed.

Cookie Bakeoff - Tuesday, December 2, 10:00 a.m. at Zion. If you would like to join a group of bakers, come on this date and we will bake and decorate cookies. Bring your favorite recipe and ingredients with you. There will be a need for mixers. Contact Joan Hoernlein for questions (734) 244-6600.



Set up for the Cookie Walk and Craft Sale Friday, December 5, 5:00 p.m.

Cookie Walk and Craft Sale - Saturday, December 6, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. Lunch will be available from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Come and enjoy this event! Volunteers are needed - a sign-up sheet is posted on the bulletin board at Zion.

Christmas Party - Saturday, December 13, 9:30 a.m. to Noon. - Breakfast Brunch and Gift Exchange. Blessing bags will be assembled for individuals confined to their homes. Bring health bars, snack crackers and nutrition bars to be placed in these bags to be distributed at Christmas time.

Orphan Grain Train - Thank you to Mike and Dale for taking the quilts and clothes to the Orphan Grain Train! Continue to place good clean clothes in the containers at Zion and CTK. Please put in small bags or garbage bags, however, do not fill garbage bags more than half full.

Facebook Page and Website - We have developed a Facebook page: LWML Zion Lutheran-mpmi. A Website for Zion is being developed and we will be on that as well. Please send any information you may have about LWML events to Kathy Tice at ticekathleen0817@gmail.com.

"Serve the Lord with Gladness-" Psalm 100:2

CHANGES, CHANGES COMING SOON!

January is our next Voter's Assembly meeting. All agendas and reports will be sent to you in advance via email in an effort to use wisely the funds our Lord has provided for our Mission and Ministry. Please print them for yourself if possible. If you don't have an email account, call the church office at 989-772-1516 for assistance. A Voter's distribution list has been prepared.

You will receive a test email in December. If you don't receive this **test** message via email in the first week, contact us so your name may be added to the list. Below are the voter obligations to be an active voter and remain active to make decision on the behalf of our members.

Dale Gust, Executive Director

A. Admission into Voters Assembly Membership

Persons who qualify for voting membership in this congregation as defined by its Constitution shall become voting members by formal request for such privilege from the Voters Assembly at a regular meeting of that body. No qualified person shall be denied the right of franchise. The right to vote shall not begin, however, until the next regular meeting following the acceptance of member into the Voters Assembly.

B. Termination of Membership

Absence from the meetings of the Voters Assembly for a period of one year shall terminate membership in the Voters Assembly. Such a member may, however, be reinstated into the voting membership upon requesting the Voters Assembly to do so. The right to vote shall not begin again, however, until the next regular meeting following such reinstatement.

End-of-Year Stewardship Reflections

As we approach the close of 2025, we pause to thank God for His continued blessings upon Zion/CTK. Our congregation remains active—caring for our members, maintaining our facilities, supporting fellowship, and sharing Christ within our community. None of this happens without your faithful generosity.

Many families consider special offerings at the end of the year. These "end-of-year extras" are often expressions of thanksgiving for God's goodness—gifts given from the heart, above regular tithes and first-of-the-month offerings. Others find that the holiday charitable spirit becomes a fitting reminder of all the ways God has provided throughout the year.

If you are prayerfully considering a year-end gift, we thank you. Your offerings support the ministry and mission of Christ's Church, both within our walls and beyond.

Looking ahead to 2026, we encourage you to consider online digital giving. Our new website, arriving soon, will include a secure donation link to simplify regular and special gifts. You may also speak with any member of the Board of Stewardship for information or help in setting up future giving.

Thank you for your faithful support throughout 2025. May the Lord bless your households with peace and joy as we finish this year in His grace.

Dale Gust for the Board of Stewardship



Subscribe to The Lutheran Witness

It is time to order your subscription to The Lutheran Witness for 2026. It is the official periodical of The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, published 11 times a year, providing stories and information that complements congregational life, fosters personal growth in faith, and helps interpret the contemporary world from a Lutheran Christian perspective. A Michigan District Supplement will be included in each issue. This supplement will contain stories, news, and events along with content that awakens, connects, challenges, and inspires through stories of hope. The new subscription year begins March 2026. Contact the church office by Thursday, December 11, to take advantage of the discounted rate of \$23.00 a year. Place your money in the offering plate with a note clearly marked "Lutheran Witness" or drop it off in the office.

Christmas Worship Opportunities



The Nativity of our Lord is a special time at Zion, one where many of our members make an extra effort to come to church. Please make plans to join us for the extra services celebrating the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ.

Advent Services will be Wednesdays,
December 3, 10 and 17 at 5:30 p.m.

Volunteerism or Servanthood?

In the life of an LCMS Lutheran Christian church, we often use the word **volunteer** when someone says "yes" to a task, a board, or a special event. Yet the Scriptures remind us of something deeper. In God's Kingdom, those who serve are not simply volunteers—they are **servants**. Their time, talents, and gifts are used to support the mission of Christ and His church.

When we agree to help with a ministry board, teach a Sunday School class, assist at a dinner, clean the kitchen, set up for worship, clean the sanctuary, or lend a hand in a small task, we are not just volunteering. We are **serving the Lord** and helping to carry out the mission and ministry of Zion/Christ the King. God works through ordinary people doing ordinary tasks that produce extraordinary blessings.

We are grateful for those who currently serve—faithfully, quietly, and joyfully. Yet the life and growth of a congregation depends on a healthy pattern: as older servants finish their time of service, younger servants joyfully step in. Long-serving members can be wonderful mentors, passing on knowledge, faith, and encouragement to those who come after them.

If you have not yet been asked—don't wait. Don't assume you are not needed. A church not only survives but *thrives* when God's people say, "**Here am I, send me!**"

If your heart is willing, simply contact the church office or a board member (posted on bulletin board) and say, "**Yes—include me. I am ready to serve.**" (Dale Gust, Executive Director)

P.S. The phone lines are open!



Christmas Eve Services

4:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Christmas Day Service

10:00 a.m.

New Year's Eve Service

7:30 p.m.

SERVICES LISTED ABOVE AT ZION

Please note that other than the Children's Christmas Service which is at Zion at 11:00 a.m. on Sunday, December 14, all other Sunday 11:00 a.m. services will be at Christ the King Chapel

December Mission of the Month

Lutheran Child and Family Services
Wellspring Lutheran Services

LCFS of Michigan is a not-for-profit corporation that provides a range of services for children and families. Services are available through multiple service sites located in the lower peninsula of Michigan. Programs incorporate prevention, intervention, and treatment components to provide a continuum of care. By joining Lutheran Child & Family Service of Michigan with Lutheran Homes of Michigan under the Wellspring Lutheran Services brand, we are able to serve people and communities in new ways. We'll be able to engage them at every stage of life to help them discover and embrace their own potential. So together, we can bring more of God's love to a world in need. From foster care and adoption to a complete line of senior services, you can be confident that as we work together, you will experience a life-changing difference.

www.wellspringlutheran.com

LCMS Stewardship Ministry

“We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Be at peace among yourselves” (1 Thess. 5:12-13).

Have you finished your Christmas shopping yet? Do you have a person or two on your list that you just don't know what to give them? I know you are running short of ideas...dad doesn't really want another tie, and your kid's teacher doesn't need another coffee mug. It can be nothing short of maddening to try to figure things out in the middle of this busy season!

As stewards of all of life and life's resources, we know that life is more than giving gifts. We stewards never want to take anything the Lord provides for granted. During this season of Advent and Christmas, it is a great idea to do whatever you can to be a faithful steward of your pastor. Even more so than the rest of the year, the demands on their time, their presence and their stewardship of the Gospel in the congregation become heightened.

The demands on pastors can wear them down and wear them out. How does the steward in the congregation serve as a faithful steward of the treasure that is their pastor? Here are a few ideas:

- Put them at the top of your prayer list. – Pray that the Lord guards them against the weariness that makes them susceptible to the work of the devil.
- Make worship a priority – St. Paul admonishes the Thessalonians and us to respect those who labor among us. There is no greater way to steward your pastor than to respect him enough to show up and receive what he has been sent to offer in the proclamation of the Gospel and administration of the Holy Sacraments.
- Be receptive to his work – If your pastor is tasked with calling you to repentance or encouraging you to be in worship, know that he is only caring for your soul.
- Esteem him highly – Take the time to thank him for his faithful service to Christ, the congregation and your family.
- Be at peace – This is an easy time for even minor annoyances to get blown out of proportion and become full-blown conflict. This not only

spoils the season of Advent and Christmas, but it also spoils our stewardship of the Gospel and those who serve us in that Gospel. Remember that Jesus came into the world to be the Prince of Peace. This is an act of grace and mercy. The steward seeks to reflect this toward their pastor and their brothers and sisters in Christ. Stewardship at Christmas can be a challenge. Stewardship of your pastor during this time of the year is critical to our shared stewardship of the Gospel at a time of year when many are more open to hear and receive it.



In memory of Joyce Carter

Wayne & Karyn Kiefer

In memory of Larry Block

Adella Bergey
Ruth Giffin

In memory of Maureen Parrish

Yvonne Fitzgerald
Ken & Doris Johnson

New Year's
EVE
Worship

Wednesday, December 31
7:30 p.m. at Zion