



GRAPEVINE

ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH IS A MOSAIC COMMUNITY SHARING THE GRACE OF CHRIST WITH ALL...

JANUARY 2026 Sunday Worship at 9:15am

In Person & Facebook live

Burmese Worship: 11:00am

New Life Church Worship: 1:00pm

Zion Lutheran Church
925 5th Avenue
Rockford, Illinois 61104

Phone: 815-964-4609
www.zionrockford.com
zionrockford@gmail.com

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Twenty-Third Anniversary

Celebrating Dreams

January 11, 2026
Sunday at 11:00am

THEME: "TABLE OF BELONGING..."

Celebrating the Legacy of Martin Luther King Jr.

Legacy Award Recipients:

Bonnie Dahlberg & Eliminate Racism 815



LUNCH SERVED AFTERWARDS IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL

Sponsored and Held at Zion Lutheran Church - 925 Fifth Avenue - Rockford, IL 61104

BAG FLUFFING

FOR CORNUCOPIA FOOD PANTRY

Fourth Monday at 1:00pm

Zion Lutheran Church - Youth Center!

Cornucopia



Food Pantry



Congregational Meeting



ANNUAL REPORT REVIEW
January 18, 2026 at 10:30am

ANNUAL MEETING

January 25, 2026
9:15am Worship
10:30am Annual Meeting

FROM PASTOR MIKE

CHRISTMAS 2026

We are still celebrating Christmas on Sunday, January 4th and we will sing on that 11th day of Christmas! Our Epiphany trees will have just stars on them until the Sunday before Ash Wednesday, which is February 18th this year. Please join us in the new years as the star that led the wisemen continue to lead us into the mystery of God's presence at worship and in community.

CELEBRATING DREAMS

Join us Sunday, January 11th at 11:00am at Zion for the "Celebrating Dreams" event, our 23rd Annual gospel jamboree. This year we will honor a person and an organization that demonstrate the legacy of Martin Luther King, Jr. This year, we are giving Bonnie Dahlberg the Legacy Award for her commitment to inclusion and hospitality for all. Bonnie has created a table of belonging for the Zion community and celebrates God's diverse creation. We are giving Eliminate Racism 815 the Legacy Award for their leadership in Rockford to lifting up the values of a just and equitable community. The day will include a time to remember the ministry of Martin Luther King, Jr. We will have special music for the gathering with various community speakers. A meal in the fellowship hall will take place at noon!

ANNUAL MEETING

In preparation for our Annual Meeting, we will be discussing the Fire Alarm system at a Forum on January 4th at 10:30am. The review of the Annual Report will be Sunday, January 18th at 10:30am. If you are interested in serving on any committees, council or a Zion partner board, please let a council member know of your interest. We are receiving nominations at this time. We will look at the past year when it comes to programs, ministries, budgets, joys and sorrows. We will gather to remember the ministry of the past year and discern our future together. Please attend the Annual Meeting, which is on Sunday, January 25th at 10:30am after worship. Please join us as we vote on the budget, reports and nominations for various leadership roles in the life of the parish.

INTERNSHIP AT ZION!

The ordination of Pastor Rachel was a wonderful celebration of the ministry we have been sharing with the church to raise up new rostered leaders. We were blessed to have Rachel as our Intern and then a Student Pastor for about 15 months. Zion did a great job supporting her in this journey, for the sake of the Gospel witness.

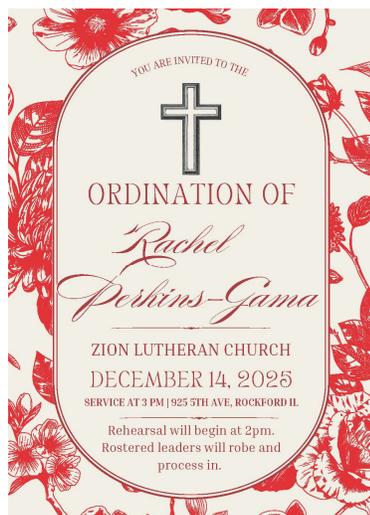
For the 2026-2027 school year, Zion will be applying for an Intern again, from Wartburg Theological Seminary. We are able to do this because there is a new ELCA Fund For Leaders grant that the seminary will receive that can be allocated toward the Internship site expenses, up to \$25,000. We would also apply for the Northern Illinois Synod grant for internship as well, which would cover the cost of interns. The conversation I had with Wartburg in December helped me to see that they value the diversity of our ministry and expansive partnerships we have created at and beyond Zion.

The congregation has been richly blessed by the many different and unique seminarians from the past. I have been blessed by the gifts and talents of seminarians who bring a broader approach to ministry, along with the resources of seminaries in this century. As I have become a seasoned pastor (another way for saying older), these new approaches and ideas have kept me on my toes theologically and intellectually. I am grateful that we can at least apply, even if we are not assigned due to the limited number of candidates. We will find out in the spring if a seminarian would be assigned.

I believe we are called to continue to serve with the neighbors of Rockford with an amazing outreach focus rooted in our Sunday morning worship where we are fed by the word, a meal and a growing community of friends in faith. This foundation is the way we are sustained for the call to serve.

Merry Christmas, Pastor Thomas

ORDINATION SERVICE AT ZION



NURSE JORI

Hello everyone! January is Mental Wellness Month. The holiday season can be a very stressful and difficult time for many people, especially those that have experienced the loss of a loved one this time of year or are experiencing health challenges. Your mental health directly affects your physical and emotional well-being, so it is important you're taking care of yourselves and remembering to take time for yourself during this season.



Self-care is different for everyone, but here are some ways you can practice self-care:

- Exercise – even if it's brief. This could be as simple as cleaning up spaces in your home or putting up decorations. Any movement is better than no movement. Come to my class Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9-10am at St. Bridget's Catholic Church! It is located in their Parish Hall, Classroom A. Please text or call me if you want more information!

- Reading can provide a sense of relaxation and entertainment, especially on a cold wintry day

- Meditation, prayer, and mindfulness can calm the mind, especially after a busy day of hosting holiday activities

- Practicing gratitude – Life can become very busy and overwhelming, especially this time of year, so it's important to take a few moments each day to share what you're grateful for – whether you write it down in a journal or share during friendly conversations – take a moment to be present with yourself and others

- Journaling can be beneficial, especially if you've had a busy day. Take a few moments to reflect on your day and everything you've accomplished

- Getting enough rest – Sleep gives our bodies the opportunity to recover from the activities of the day, refreshes our mind for the next day, and gives us a break from stress or challenges we may be facing. 8 hours of sleep is ideal for full physical rest and recovery

- Being creative, whether you like to paint, draw, color, sew, crochet, knit, do holiday or DIY crafts, bake or cook a new recipe, journal, etc. The opportunities to express yourself and creativity are endless, and may bring joy to others

- Maintaining physical hygiene – showering, getting a haircut, getting a manicure or pedicure, doing your makeup, applying deodorant or perfume/cologne, applying lotion to dry skin or chap stick to dry lips, keeping your eyeglasses clean, etc. are all ways to maintain your physical hygiene. These tasks may seem simple, but for people that are experiencing depression, may take a lot of energy, physically and mentally

If any of you are hospitalized and would like a visit from me, please notify the church office or feel free to contact me by phone at 630-465-2135.

Blessings to you all, Jori Roysdon, Faith Community Nurse

RUTHIE'S KITCHEN MINISTRY

Christ Community Church of Clinton, WI



Dickerson/Nieman Donation for RK



Thanksgiving Dinner in November



ZION PARTNERS CHRISTMAS PARTY



JANUARY 2026 CALENDAR

| Sunday | | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--------|--|--|--|--|--|---------------------|---|
| 28 | 9:15am Christmas Worship 10:30am Forum: Fire Alarm System Update 11:00am Burmese Worship – Chapel 1:00pm New Life Worship – Conrad Room | 29 | 30 | 31 8:00am Bible Study - Stockholm Inn | 1 8:00am Bible Study - Stockholm Inn | 2 Office Closed | 3 1:00pm Ruthie's Kitchen |
| 4 | 9:15am Worship—Baptism of our Lord 10:15am Fellowship 10:30am Forum: Fire Alarm System Update 11:00am Burmese Worship – Chapel 1:00pm New Life Worship – Conrad Room | 5 9:30am Book Study | 6 1:00pm Multicultural Team 6:00pm Church Council - Multipurpose Room | 7 8:00am Bible Study - Stockholm Inn | 8 4:00pm Katie's Cup Board 5:30pm Zion Development Board | 9 Office Closed | 10 Set Up for Celebrating Dreams 1:00pm Ruthie's Kitchen |
| 11 | 9:15am Worship 10:15am Fellowship 11:00am Celebrating Dreams 11:00am Burmese Worship – Chapel 1:00pm New Life Worship – Conrad Room | 12 9:30am Book Study | 13 9:00am Worship Team 10:30am Memorial Committee Meeting 1:30pm Multicultural Team 2:30pm Zion Outreach | 14 8:00am Bible Study - Stockholm Inn 9:00am Grapevine Articles Due 11:00am Missions Team - Nursery | 15 Grapevine Mailing 11:00am Finance Committee | 16 Office Closed | 17 NO Ruthie's Kitchen Noon-4:00pm Works of Faith—Kitchen and Fellowship Hall |
| 18 | 9:15am Worship 10:15am Annual Report Review 11:00am Burmese Worship – Chapel 1:00pm New Life Worship – Conrad Room | 19 9:30am Book Study | 20 3:30pm Building and Grounds | 21 8:00am Bible Study - Stockholm Inn | 22 4:30pm Patriots Board | 23 Office Closed | 24 1:00pm Ruthie's Kitchen |
| 25 | 9:15am Worship 10:30am Annual Meeting 11:00am Burmese Worship – Chapel 1:00pm New Life Worship – Conrad Room | 26 9:30am Book Study 1:00pm Bag Fluffing - Fellowship Hall | 27 5:00pm HR Committee 6:00pm Church Council | 28 8:00am Bible Study - Stockholm Inn | 29 | 30 Office Closed | 31 NO Ruthie's Kitchen |

LEADERSHIP TEAM

Our Ministers - All the People of Zion

Senior Pastor Michael Thomas

Pastor Emeritus Denver Bitner

Office Manager & Finance Secretary: Jolyn Hess

Outreach Director & Deaconess Student:

Janice Forrest

Faith Community Nurse: Jori Roysden

Music Ministry Coordinator: Jodi Beach

Custodian: Shanita Baker

Worship Media: Kurt Brown

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Michael Beert, Pam Bitner, Bonnie Dahlberg,
Gary Fulkerson, Debbie Gortowski, Thomas Habing,

Karen Kermgard, Angeles Polcher,

Ron Simmons, Kris Sommer,

Pastor Michael Thomas, and Neal Tolodxi

Church Council Officers

President: Kris Sommer

Vice-President: Thomas Habing

Treasurer: Michael Beert

Secretary: Bonnie Dahlberg

Pastor: Michael E. Thomas

www.zionrockford.com

www.facebook.com/zionlutheranrockford

www.youtube.com/zionrockford

PRAYER CORNER

WE ASK YOU TO PRAY FOR:

- ◇ The ELCA, Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, Bishop Stacie Fidler, Pastor Michael Thomas, Pastor Emeritus Denver Bitner, the Zion Church Council, Pastor Caleb Uk of the Burmese congregation; the Zion Staff, Zion Outreach Board, Staff and Programs of Patriots' Gateway Center, Katie's Cup and Zion Development Corporation.
- ◇ Senior Pastor Ndeshifose Akyoo, Assisting Pastor Evan Kiula, and Assisting Pastor Yohanna Samson Ntui of Sepuka Parish (Tanzania)
- ◇ Bishop Peter Paul Thomas of St. Thomas Lutheran Church and Pastor Selvakumarin the Arcot Lutheran Church of India.
- ◇ Mission Partner, Pastor Mytch Dorvilier
- ◇ For the Northern Illinois Synod; North Conference churches; Midtown Lutheran Parish, faculty and students of Rockford Lutheran Schools, Rockford Area Lutheran Ministries.
- ◇ For those who grieve loss of loved ones: Larry Hall, Eloise Anderson, and Darrell Lindstrom.
- ◇ For healing: Colette Buchert, Linda Callahan, Marjorie Carlson, Yolanda Churchill, Charlie Dahlberg, Danielle, Norma Daugherty, Karen Eisman, Deanna Hartenberg, John Hoyt, Leola LeGault, Jim McDowell, Les, Morgan, Betty Jo Rodey, Wayne Spitzer, Carl Stoutenberg, Carrie Steder, Neal Tolodxi, Brian Veitch, Nancy Warden, and Gary Wegner, Jr.

If you have a prayer request or a prayer of gratitude to share, please notify Pastor Mike.

The prayer room is upstairs to the left of the sanctuary and is available during office hours and on Sunday before and after worship services.

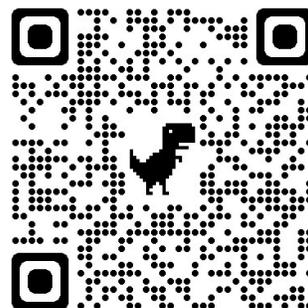
GRAPEVINE DEADLINE FOR THE FEBRUARY 2026 GRAPEVINE, EMAIL BY JANUARY 10, 2026 to submit an article: zionrockford@gmail.com, or please send a hardcopy to the church office.

OFFERINGS & DONATIONS WELCOMED!

Mailed...In-Person...Online

We are grateful for your generosity in supporting our ministries at and beyond Zion. There are envelopes in the place you are sitting at in worship and in the lobby of the church. Donations can be mailed to the church office or placed in the Offering Box in the back at the pole on the pulpit side before, during and after worship. You can also donate through the mobile app called, **Vanco Mobile**. You can download the Vanco Mobile app for free from the App Store or Google Play. From there, you can make a one-time donation or set up recurring giving right through the app to our various ministries. If you have questions with online or the mobile app, please email zionrockfordfinances@gmail.com for more information.

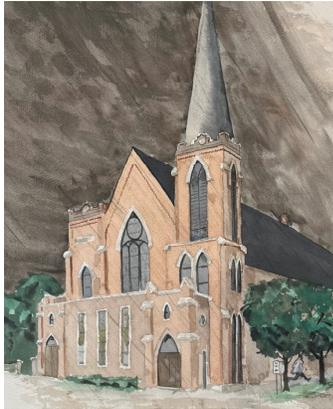
VANCO
FAITH



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**Annual Meeting
January 25, 2026**

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ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH IS A MOSAIC COMMUNITY SHARING THE GRACE OF CHRIST WITH ALL...

Zion is a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

PARTNERSHIPS



Sunday Worship at 9:15am In the Worship Space

Also Facebook Live/Online Worship

(Also posted at www.youtube.com/zionrockford afterwards)

Burmese Worship at 11:30am New Life Worship at 1:00pm