

Zion Lutheran Church  
925 5th Avenue - Rockford, Illinois  
February 8, 2026 at 9:15am  
[www.facebook.com/  
zionlutheranrockford](https://www.facebook.com/zionlutheranrockford)  
FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY



PRELUDE "Waltz" By Johannes Brahms  
- Katie Mathiesen, Flute

WELCOME

ANNOUNCEMENTS

*The Holy Spirit calls and gathers us together  
as the people of God*

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, + one God, the  
Creator of heaven and earth, the Word who  
spoke life into being, the Wind stirring the  
waters.

**Amen.**

Let us turn in confession to the one who knows us completely. Mighty God, lover of justice, **you call us to life in community, but we have served our own interests at the expense of our neighbors. We have sown deceit where honesty was needed. We say the right words, but our hearts are far from you. Turn us to seek your face. Knit us together and give us the mind of Christ, that we may do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with you, our God. Amen.**

The former things have passed away, and new things God now declares: Like a spring of water that never fails, God covers you in the righteousness of Christ, and forgives your sin in + Jesus' name. May the Spirit give you strength to live for others, and bless you with the gift of peace. **Amen.**

## GATHERING SONG "Christ Be Our Light"



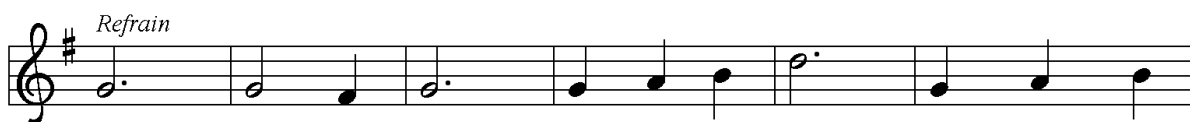
1	Long - ing	for	light,	we	wait	in	dark - ness.	Long - ing	for
2	Long - ing	for	peace,	our	world	is	trou - bled.	Long - ing	for
3	Long - ing	for	food,	man - y	are		hun - gry.	Long - ing	for
4	Long - ing	for	shel - ter,	man - y	are		home - less.	Long - ing	for
5	Man - y	the	gifts,	man - y	the		peo - ple,	man - y	the



truth,	we	turn	to	you.	Make	us	your	own,
hope,	man - y	de -	spair.	Your	word	a -	lone	
wa - ter,	man - y	still	thirst.	Make	us	your	bread,	
warmth,	man - y	are	cold.	Make	us	your	build - ing,	
hearts that	yearn	to	be - long.	Let	us	be	ser - vants	



your ho - ly peo - ple, light for the world to see.  
has pow'r to save us. Make us your liv - ing voice.  
bro - ken for oth - ers, shared un - til all are fed.  
shel - ter - ing oth - ers, walls made of liv - ing stone.  
to one an - oth - er, signs of your king - dom come.



Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the



dark - ness. Christ, be our light! Shine in your



church gath - ered to - day.

## GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**



Lord, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy.



Lord, have mer - cy; have mer - cy, O Lord.

SONG OF PRAISE    “You Are Holy”       Red Hymnal #525

You are holy, you are whole. You are always ever more  
than we ever understand. You are always at hand.

Blessed are you coming near. Blessed are you coming here  
to your church in wine and bread, raised from soil, raised from dead.

You are holy, you are wholeness, you are present.

Let the cosmos praise you, Lord!

Sing hosanna in the highest! Sing hosanna!

Sing hosanna to our God!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray.

Lord God, with endless mercy you receive the prayers of all who call  
upon you. By your Spirit show us the things we ought to do, and give us  
the grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and  
Lord.

**Amen.**

**THE WORD**

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song.*

FIRST READING Isaiah 58:1-9a

Shout out; do not hold back! Lift up your voice like a trumpet! Announce to  
my people their rebellion, to the house of Jacob their sins. Yet day after day  
they seek me and delight to know my ways, as if they were a nation that  
practiced righteousness and did not forsake the ordinance of their God;  
they ask of me righteous judgments; they want God on their side. “Why do  
we fast, but you do not see? Why humble ourselves, but you do not notice?”  
Look, you serve your own interest on your fast day and oppress all your  
workers. You fast only to quarrel and to fight and to strike with a wicked fist.  
Such fasting as you do today will not make your voice heard on high. Is such  
the fast that I choose, a day to humble oneself? Is it to bow down the head  
like a bulrush and to lie in sackcloth and ashes? Will you call this a fast, a day

acceptable to the LORD? Is not this the fast that I choose: to loose the bonds of injustice, to undo the straps of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house; when you see the naked, to cover them and not to hide yourself from your own kin? Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up quickly; your vindicator shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry for help, and he will say, "Here I am."

Word of God. Word of Promise. **Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM 112:1-9

Hallelujah! Happy are they who fear the LORD  
and have great delight in God's commandments!

**Their descendants will be mighty in the land;  
the generation of the upright will be blessed.**

Wealth and riches will be in their house,  
and their righteousness will last forever.

**Light shines in the darkness for the upright;  
the righteous are merciful and full of compassion.**

It is good for them to be generous in lending  
and to manage their affairs with justice.

**For they will never be shaken;  
the righteous will be kept in everlasting remembrance.**

They will not be afraid of any evil rumors;  
their heart is steadfast, trusting in the LORD.

**Their heart is established and will not shrink,  
until they see their desire upon their enemies.**

They have given freely to the poor,  
and their righteousness stands fast forever;  
they will hold up their head with honor.

## SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 2:1-12

When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come proclaiming the testimony of God to you with superior speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I came to you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling. My speech and my proclamation were made not with persuasive words of wisdom but with a demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God. Yet among the mature we do speak wisdom, though it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are being destroyed. But we speak God's wisdom, a hidden mystery, which God decreed before the ages for our glory and which none of the rulers of this age understood, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"—God has revealed to us through the Spirit, for the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For what human knows what is truly human except the human spirit that is within? So also no one comprehends what is truly God's except the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world but the Spirit that is from God, so that we may understand the gifts bestowed on us by God.

Word of God. Word of Promise.    **Thanks be to God.**

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

"Celtic Alleluia"    Red Hymnal #174  
Alleluia, alleluia. Alleluia, alleluia.

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the 5th Chapter.  
**Glory to you, O Lord.**

## GOSPEL: Matthew 5:13-20

[Jesus said:] “You are the salt of the earth, but if salt has lost its taste, how can its saltiness be restored? It is no longer good for anything but is thrown out and trampled under foot. “You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hid. People do not light a lamp and put it under the bushel basket; rather, they put it on the lampstand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I tell you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one letter, not one stroke of a letter, will pass from the law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” The gospel of our Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON                      Pastor Denver Bitner

SERMON SONG        “I Am The Light of the World”  
Refrain: I am the Light of the World  
You people come and follow me.  
If you follow and love, You'll learn the mystery  
Of what you were meant to do and be.

1. When the song of the angels is stilled.  
When the star in the sky is gone.  
When the kings and the shepherds  
have found their way home.  
The work of Christmas is begun!

Refrain: I am the Light of the World  
You people come and follow me.  
If you follow and love, You'll learn the mystery  
Of what you were meant to do and be.

2. To find the lost and lonely one, To heal that broken soul with love,  
To feed the hungry children with warmth and good food,  
To feel the earth below the sky above!

3. To free the prisoner from his chains,  
To make the powerful care,  
To rebuild the nations with strength and goodwill,  
To call a man your brother everywhere.

4. To bring hope to every task you do,  
To dance at a baby's new birth,  
To make music in an old man's heart,  
And sing to the colors of the earth!

#### APOSTLES' CREED

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

#### PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

Let us pray for the whole people of God in Christ Jesus, and for all people according to their needs.

Lord, in your mercy      **Hear our prayer.**



Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

#### SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

#### MUSIC OFFERING & OFFERING

“The Swan” (“Le Cygne” from *Carnival of Animals*)

by Camille Saint-Saëns Kate Mathiesen - flute

Offering envelopes are available in the pews at your seat to designate gifts toward the ministries of Zion. The Offering Box is by the prayer table. You can also go online at [www.zionrockford.com](http://www.zionrockford.com) or you can click on the QR code



#### TABLE BLESSING “Come to the Table” Red Hymnal #481

Come to the table of mercy,  
prepared with the wine and the bread.

All who are hungry and thirsty,  
come, and your souls will be fed.

Come at the Lord's invitation;  
receive from his nail-scarred hand.

Eat of the bread of salvation;  
drink of the blood of the Lamb.

**THE MEAL** - *God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

#### PRAYER

Holy God, gracious and merciful, you bring forth food from the earth and nourish your whole creation. Turn our hearts toward those who hunger in any way, that all may know your care; and prepare us now to feast on the bread of life, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give God thanks and praise.**

## WORDS OF INSTITUTION

In the night in which he was betrayed, Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me. Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

## LORD'S PRAYER

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

*Please come to the front for communion today.*

*Receive the wafer with an open hand.*

*The cups of wine are red and juice is in the center and the juice is clear.*

*There are individual communion cups at the prayer table by the piano.*

*Dispose of them in the lobby.*

## COMMUNION      “Give Thanks” —Thong Laungxay

### “Drawn to the Light”

- 1      People who walk in darkness have sought  
a light in the heart of the darkest night.  
Just when we thought all would be lost,  
we were drawn to the light of God.

## Refrain

Dawn is in sight! Gone is the night, drawn to the light and the morning.  
Glorious and bright, oh, what a sight to be drawn to the light of God.

2 How can we tell a heaven from hell  
if ev'ryone dwells in the dark of night? Morning dispels, gently compels,  
and we're drawn to the light of God. *Refrain*

3 Where is the sun? Oh, there will be none!  
The Lamb is the one who is shining bright,  
bids us to come! Life has begun  
when we're drawn to the light of God. *Refrain*

## "Holy, holy"

1 Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly,  
2 Gracious Fa - ther, gra - cious Fa - ther, we're so blest to be your  
3 Pre - cious Je - sus, pre - cious Je - sus, we're so glad that you've re -  
4 Ho - ly Spir - it, Ho - ly Spir - it, come and fill our hearts a -  
5 Hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah, . . .

Lord God Al - might - y; and we lift our hearts be - fore you as a  
chil - dren, gra - cious Fa - ther; and we lift our heads be - fore you as a  
deemed us, pre - cious Je - sus; and we lift our hands be - fore you as a  
new, . . . Ho - ly Spir - it; and we lift our voice be - fore you as a  
. . . . . hal - le - lu - jah; and we lift our hearts be - fore you as a

to - ken of our love, ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly.  
to - ken of our love, gra - cious Fa - ther, gra - cious Fa - ther.  
to - ken of our love, pre - cious Je - sus, pre - cious Je - sus.  
to - ken of our love, Ho - ly Spir - it, Ho - ly Spir - it.  
to - ken of our love, hal - le - lu - jah, hal - le - lu - jah.

May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you in his grace.

**Amen.**

#### PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray: Radiant God, we have seen your glory in the face of Jesus Christ. In the sacrament of his body and blood you have drawn us to your heart. Send us from this table with delight, that our lives may reflect the beauty of your love, and bear witness to all we have seen and heard, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

**Amen.**

#### BLESSING

May the triune God, who has put a new song in your mouth and tuned your heart for praise + bless you now and forever.

**Amen.**

#### THE SENDING

*God blesses us and sends us in mission to the world.*

#### SENDING SONG “We Are Marching In The Light of God”

Red Hymnal #866

We are marching in the light of God,  
we are marching in the light of God.  
We are marching in the light of God,  
we are marching in the light of God.

We are marching, (marching, we are marching, marching,) we are  
marching in the light of God.

We are marching, (marching, we are marching, marching,) we are  
marching in the light of God.

We are dancing . . .      We are praying . . .  
We are singing . . .

SENDING

Go in peace, beloved children of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE “We Are Marching In the Light of God”  
Zion’s Combo

## Good Friday Swedish Service

Friday, April 3, 2026 at Noon

**Zion Lutheran Church**

925 Fifth Avenue – Rockford, IL



- Good Friday/Långfredagen Service at noon
- Liturgy bulletin all spoken in Swedish
  - Swedish Community Choir
  - Jodi Beach, Special Music
- Loose offering: Ruthie's Kitchen
  - Sermon in English
- Holy Communion liturgy in Swedish



Zion Lutheran Church  
925 Fifth Avenue - Rockford, IL 61104  
Office: 815.964.4609  
[www.zionrockford.com](http://www.zionrockford.com)

Swedish Historical Society  
404 South 3rd Street  
Rockford, IL 61104  
Office: 815.963.5559  
[www.swedishhistorical.org](http://www.swedishhistorical.org)

## “WE THE PEOPLE”

Civil Rights Conference

Speaker: Mark Charles

*Common Memory Tour*

Held at Patriots Gateway Community Center

Saturday, April 18, 2026

9:00am-3:00pm

\$25.00

Sponsored by Zion Lutheran Church

## 2026 Midtown Midweek Lenten at Noon

# Conversations With Jesus

EXERCISE CLASS BEFORE WORSHIP & SIMPLE LUNCH AFTER WORSHIP

### ASH WEDNESDAY WORSHIP

February 18 at Zion Lutheran Church at Noon

February 25 at Calvary Lutheran Church at Noon  
(held at Emmanuel Lutheran Church)

Preacher: Pastor Mike Thomas

March 4 at Salem Lutheran Church at Noon

Preacher: Pastor Chuck Olson

March 11 at Zion Lutheran Church at Noon

Preacher: Pastor Frank Langhoff

March 18 2 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church at Noon

Preacher: Pastor Leslie Aska

March 25 at First Lutheran Church at Noon

Preacher: Pastor Bill Dahlberg

CONVERSATIONS  
WITH JESUS  
LENT 2026



WOZ—We are taking a winter program break, but are still collecting food for Cornucopia Food Pantry. The February items are chili, flip top cans preferred, and Ramen noodles. The grocery cart in the Narthex has been really empty. Please help fill it! Thanks Karen Kermgard

PALM BRANCHES - If you have palm branches from last year, please bring them into worship or the office before February 10th. Thank you!

## **BAG FLUFFING**

FOR CORNUCOPIA FOOD PANTRY

**Fourth Monday at 1:00pm**

Zion Lutheran Church – Youth Center!

**Cornucopia**



**Food Pantry**





**PRAYER CORNER! WE ASK YOU TO PRAY FOR:**



- ◇ The ELCA, Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, Bishop Stacie Fidler, Pastor 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 and Pastor Selvakumar of Arcot Lutheran Church in India and Pastor Mytch Dorvilier.
- ◇ For the Northern Illinois Synod; North Conference churches; Midtown Lutheran Parish, faculty and students of Rockford Lutheran Schools.
- ◇ For those who grieve the loss of loved ones: Mary Norman.
- ◇ For healing: Colette Buchert, Norm Buchert, Linda Callahan, Marjorie Carlson, Yolanda Churchill, Charlie Dahlberg, Jeff Dahlberg, Norma Daugherty, Karen Eiseman, John Hoyt, Gary Johnson, Greg Johnson, Leola LeGault, Jim McDowell, Les Morgan, Terry Morgan, Betty Jo Rodey, Wayne Spitzer, Carrie Steder, Kamara Thomas, Deb Tolodxi, Brian Veitch, Nancy Warden, Danielle Wegner, Gary Wegner, Jr., and Gary Zeien.

If you have a prayer request or a prayer of thanksgiving 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.

## **WORSHIP LEADER'S TODAY**

Presiding Minister	Pastor Denver Bitner, Pastor Emeritus
Altar Guild	Kris Sommer
Assisting Minister	Janice Forrest, Student Deaconess
Communion Asst:	Janice Forrest

Fellowship:	Bonnie Dahlberg
Musician:	Jodi Beach
Reader:	Nancy Warden
Usher:	Charlie Dahlberg

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- \* Pattern of Worship—resource from ELW pages 91-93

### PROGRAMS AND MINISTRIES THIS WEEK

Sunday	9:15am	Worship
	10:30am	Fellowship—Laotian Reunion
	11:00am	Burmese Worship Service—Chapel
	1:00pm	New Life Worship Service-Conrad Room
Monday	9:30am	Book Study—Multipurpose Room
	3:00pm	Women's Circle at Stockholm Inn
Tuesday	8am-Noon	RVC ESL Class—Marander Room (Tuesday-Thursday, 2-10 to 4-30-26)
	1:30pm	Multicultural Committee
Wednesday	8:00am	Bible Study—Stockholm Inn
Saturday	9:30am	Visitation for Mary Norman
	11:00am	Mary Norman Memorial Service
Sunday	9:15am	Installation of ZDC CEO, Ron Clewer
	10:30am	Forum: Affordable Housing
	11:00am	Burmese Worship Service—Chapel
	1:00pm	New Life Worship Service-Conrad Room

### UPCOMING

February 18	Noon	Ash Wednesday Worship
February 22	10:30am	Forum: Fire Alarm System Capital Appeal
March 7	8:00am	CRE—Sauk Valley Community College
March 8	10:30am	Forum with Rabbi Binah Wing: "What is Purim?"
April 2	Noon	Maundy Thursday Worship
April 3	Noon	Swedish Good Friday Worship Service
April 18	9am-3pm	Civil Rights Conference "We The People" - Patriots Gateway Center
June 12-13	8:00am	Synod Assembly—Augustana College

### WORSHIP SERVICES ONLINE

<https://www.facebook.com/zionlutheranrockford>

[www.youtube.com/zionrockford](http://www.youtube.com/zionrockford)

Please subscribe to the Zion YouTube channel

<https://twitter.com/ZionRockford>



# LAOTIAN REUNION

## February 8, 2026

### Worship at 9:15am & Food at 10:30am

Pastor Bitner Preaching and Sharing the History of  
the Laotian community in the Zion  
neighborhood since the late 1970's!

Held at Zion Lutheran Church  
Let us know if you would like to help!  
Email [zionrockford@gmail.com](mailto:zionrockford@gmail.com) or call Zion at 815-964-4609!

Zion Lutheran Church – 925 Fifth Avenue – Rockford, IL 61104



**ZION FORUM**  
February 15, 2026  
9:15am Installation  
10:30am in Fellowship Hall

**A CONVERSATION WITH RON CLEWER**  
**THE NEW CEO OF ZION DEVELOPMENT**

### Ash Wednesday Worship

FEBRUARY 18, 2026 AT NOON



Soup lunch  
after worship

## Women's Group!

**February 9, 2026**  
**Monday at 3:00-5:00pm**  
**At Stockholm Inn**

Join us for a new small group for women!

Any woman interested can attend or  
email us of your interest at [zionrockford@gmail.com](mailto:zionrockford@gmail.com)!  
Call Zion at 815-964-4609 for the address!

Zion Lutheran Church – 925 Fifth Avenue – Rockford, IL 61104



## SEASONED SAINTS GROUP

Join Pastor Mike for Food, Fellowship & Faith  
Topic: "Conversations With Jesus"

**Tuesday, March 3, 2026**  
**5:00-7:00pm**

Aunt Mary's (room reserved)  
East State Street  
Rockford, IL



**SEASONED SAINTS**  
MINISTRY