

Zion Lutheran Church  
925 5th Avenue - Rockford, Illinois  
January 4, 2026 at 9:15am  
[www.facebook.com/zionlutheranrockford](http://www.facebook.com/zionlutheranrockford)

SECOND SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS  
*GRACE AND TRUTH*



PRELUDE      "O Little Town of Bethlehem"      arr. By Mark Hayes

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

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

CONFESSON AND FORGIVENESS

Blessed be the holy Trinity, **☩** one God, Wonderful Counselor,  
Mighty Savior, Prince of Peace.  
**Amen.**

Trusting in God's steadfast love and faithfulness, let us confess our sin.  
Reconciling God,  
**we yearn for your presence to transform our grief, pain, and despair.**  
**We confess that we have not always prepared room in our hearts for your love; we have not always recognized your presence among us; we have not always embraced your message of peace. We cry out, weary with the burden of violence, oppression, and fear. We confess our failure to make room for those seeking refuge; our participation in violent systems that harm your innocent ones; our reluctance to embody your good news. Be born in us today and teach us to sing the joyful song of your salvation. Amen.**

God's grace upon grace flows over you. **☩** Christ's presence redeems the whole creation. Your sins are forgiven. Let the earth rejoice and be glad!  
**Amen.**

## GATHERING SONG “Angels, From the Realms of Glory” Red Hymnal #275

- 1 Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;  
once you sang creation's story, now proclaim Messiah's birth:  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn king.
- 2 Shepherds, in the fields abiding, watching o'er your flocks by night,  
God with us is now residing, yonder shines the infant light.  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn king.
- 3 Sages, leave your contemplations, brighter visions beam afar;  
seek the great desire of nations, you have seen his natal star.  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn king.
- 4 All creation, join in praising God, the Father, Spirit, Son,  
evermore your voices raising to the eternal Three in One.  
Come and worship, come and worship,  
worship Christ, the newborn king.

## 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.**

We gather to celebrate the birth of a child.

**We remember the child born in a cave along the hills of Bethlehem.**

We gather and remember the fear of Herod that led to suffering.

**We remember that God is present in the suffering of parents who grieve the loss of a child.**

We pray for those whose children die because of war and violence.

**We remember that the holy spirit is with us in the valley and on the mountain of calvary.**

Come, let us worship with the faith of a child.

**Come, let us remember the manger that led to the cross.**

SONG OF PRAISE    "Hark! The Herald Angels Sing"    Red Hymnal #270

Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king;  
peace on earth, and mercy mild, God and sinners reconciled."

Joyful, all you nations, rise; join the triumph of the skies;  
with angelic hosts proclaim, "Christ is born in Bethlehem!"

Refrain: Hark! The herald angels sing, "Glory to the newborn king!"

2. Christ, by highest heav'n adored, Christ, the everlasting Lord,  
late in time behold him come, offspring of a virgin's womb.

Veiled in flesh the Godhead see! Hail, incarnate deity!

Pleased as man with us to dwell, Jesus, our Emmanuel! Refrain

3. Hail the heav'n-born Prince of peace! Hail the Sun of righteousness!

Light and life to all he brings, ris'n with healing in his wings.

Mild he lays his glory by, born that we no more may die,  
born to raise each child of earth, born to give us second birth. Refrain

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Let us pray. Almighty God, you have filled all the earth with the light of your incarnate Word. By your grace empower us to reflect your light in all that we do, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**THE WORD**

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

## FIRST READING Jeremiah 31:7-14

<sup>7</sup> Thus says the LORD: Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob, and raise shouts for the chief of the nations; proclaim, give praise, and say, “Save, O LORD, your people, the remnant of Israel.” <sup>8</sup> See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth, among them the blind and the lame, those with child and those in labor together; a great company, they shall return here. <sup>9</sup> With weeping they shall come, and with consolations I will lead them back; I will let them walk by brooks of water, in a straight path where they shall not stumble, for I have become a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn. <sup>10</sup> Hear the word of the LORD, O nations, and declare it in the coastlands far away; say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him and will keep him as a shepherd does a flock.” <sup>11</sup> For the LORD has ransomed Jacob and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him. <sup>12</sup> They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD, over the grain, the wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; their life shall become like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again. <sup>13</sup> Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old shall be merry. I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow. <sup>14</sup> I will give the priests their fill of fatness, and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty, says the LORD.

Word of God. Word of Promise.

**Thanks be to God.**

## PSALM 147:12-20

<sup>12</sup> Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem;  
praise your God, O Zion,  
<sup>13</sup> **who has strengthened the bars of your gates  
and has blessed your children within you.**  
<sup>14</sup> God has established peace on your borders  
and satisfies you with the finest wheat.  
<sup>15</sup> **God sends out a command to the earth,  
a word that runs very swiftly.**

<sup>16</sup> God gives snow like wool,  
scattering frost like ashes.

<sup>17</sup> **God scatters hail like bread crumbs.**  
**Who can stand against God's cold?**

<sup>18</sup> The LORD sends forth the word and melts them;  
the wind blows, and the waters flow.

<sup>19</sup> **God declares the word to Jacob,**  
**statutes and judgments to Israel.**

<sup>20</sup> The LORD has not done so to any other nation;  
they do not know God's judgments. Hallelujah!

#### SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:3-14

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. <sup>5</sup> He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, <sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. <sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace <sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight <sup>9</sup> he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, <sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. <sup>11</sup> In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, <sup>12</sup> so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. <sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; <sup>14</sup> this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

Word of God. Word of Promise.

**Thanks be to God.**

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

“Emmanuel”

Emmanuel, Emmanuel, His name is called Emmanuel;  
God with us, revealed in us; His name is called Emmanuel.  
(Repeat)

The Holy Gospel according to John, the 1st Chapter.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

**GOSPEL: John 1:1-18**

<sup>1</sup> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God. <sup>3</sup> All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being <sup>4</sup> in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. <sup>5</sup> The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overtake it. <sup>6</sup> There was a man sent from God whose name was John. <sup>7</sup> He came as a witness to testify to the light, so that all might believe through him. <sup>8</sup> He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the light. <sup>9</sup> The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. <sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God, <sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God. <sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John testified to him and cried out, “This was he of whom I said, ‘He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.’ ”) <sup>16</sup> From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

The gospel of our Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

SERMON

Pastor Michael Thomas

SERMON SONG

“Love Has Come”

Red Hymnal #292

1 Love has come—a light in the darkness!

Love shines forth in the Bethlehem skies.

See, all heaven has come to proclaim it;

hear how their song of joy arises: Love! Love! Born unto you, a Savior!

Love! Love! Glory to God on high.

2 Love is born! Come, share in the wonder.

Love is God now asleep in the hay.

See the glow in the eyes of his mother;

what is the name her heart is saying?

Love! Love! Love is the name she whispers;

Love! Love! Jesus, Immanuel.

3 Love has come and never will leave us!

Love is life everlasting and free. Love is Jesus within and among us.

Love is the peace our hearts are seeking.

Love! Love! Love is the gift of Christmas;

Love! Love! Praise to you, God on high!

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.**

With the joy of Christ's birth in our hearts, we commend our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your boundless mercy and eternal love; through Jesus Christ our Savior.      **Amen.**

## SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you.    **And also with you.**

## MUSIC OFFEREEING & OFFERING    "Heirlooms"      Jodi Beach

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    "This Is Christ's Body"

This is Christ's body, broken and blest. Feed us with mercy and love.  
We are Christ's body, broken and blest. Heal us and make us one.

## THE MEAL

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

God is now in flesh appearing. Come to the feast of joy!

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 SONG

**“What Feast of Love”** Red Hymnal #487

- 1 What feast of love is offered here, what banquet come from heaven?  
What food of everlasting life, what gracious gift is given?  
This, this is Christ the king, the bread come down from heaven.  
Oh, taste and see and sing! How sweet the manna given!
- 2 What light of truth is offered here, what covenant from heaven?  
What hope of everlasting life, what wondrous word is given?  
This, this is Christ the king, the sun come down from heaven.  
Oh, see and hear and sing! The Word of God is given!
- 3 What wine of love is offered here, what crimson drink from heaven?  
What stream of everlasting life, what precious blood is given?  
This, this is Christ the king, the sweetest wine of heaven.  
Oh, taste and see and sing! The Son of God is given!

**“The First Noel”** Red Hymnal #300

- 1 The first Noel the angel did say  
was to certain poor shepherds in fields as they lay;  
in fields where they lay, keeping their sheep,  
on a cold winter's night that was so deep.

*Refrain*

Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel!  
Born is the King of Israel.

2 They looked up and saw a star shining in the east beyond them far;  
and to the earth it gave great light,  
and so it continued both day and night. *Refrain*

3 And by the light of that same star three wise men came from country far;  
to seek for a king was their intent,  
and to follow the star wherever it went. *Refrain*

4 This star drew near to the northwest, o'er Bethlehem it took its rest;  
and there it did both stop and stay  
right over the place where Jesus lay. *Refrain*

5 Then entered in those wise men three,  
full rev'rently upon their knee, and offered there in his presence  
their gold, and myrrh, and frankincense. *Refrain*

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: Incarnate God, you are among us at this table. May we treasure  
this gift and ponder in our hearts the mystery of your presence.

Move us to discover the wonders of your love in the everyday moments of  
our lives, through Christ born in us. **Amen.**

#### BLESSING

The triune God, glorious Mystery, holy Incarnate One, abiding Comforter,   
bless you with endless grace, peace, and joy. **Amen.**

#### THE SENDING

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

SENDING SONG     “O Come, All Ye Faithful”     Red Hymnal # 283

1 O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant!  
O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem;  
come and behold him, born the king of angels:

Refrain: O come, let us adore him, O come, let us adore him,  
O come, let us adore him, Christ the Lord!

2. The highest, most holy, light of light eternal,  
born of a virgin, a mortal he comes; Son of the Father  
now in flesh appearing! Refrain

3. Sing, choirs of angels, sing in exultation,  
sing, all ye citizens of heaven above! Glory to God in the highest: Refrain

4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this happy morning;  
Jesus, to thee be glory giv'n! Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing:  
Refrain

## SENDING

Glory to God in the highest!

**And peace to God's people on earth!**

## Go in the joy of Christmas!

# Thanks be to God!

## POSTLUDE      "Go, Tell It On The Mountain"

arr. By Mark Hayes

## WOMEN OF ZION

During the month of January we are requesting donations of **Macaroni and Cheese** (Also cereal is always in demand) for distribution at the Cornucopia Food Pantry. There is a great need for these items! A grocery cart is in the Narthex for donations, or you can bring them to the church office. You can donate to Cornucopia on our church website and we pass along the donation to the pantry organization. Thanks so much!

## WORSHIP LEADER'S TODAY

Altar Guild Kris Sommer  
Communion Asst. Janice Forrest  
Fellowship: Bonnie Dahlberg  
Reader:  
Music: Jodi Beach  
Usher: Charlie Dahlberg



### *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:*

*Legacy Award Recipients:  
Bonnie Dahlberg & Eliminate Racism 815*

#### LUNCH SERVED AFTERWARDS IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL

**LUNCH SERVED AFTERWARDS IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL**



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

- ◊ The ELCA, Presiding Bishop Yehiel Curry, Bishop Stacie Fidlar, 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 Arcot Lutheran Church in India and Pastor Mytch Dorvillier.
- ◊ 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 the loss of loved ones.
- ◊ For healing: Colette Buchert, Norm Buchert, Linda Callahan, Marjorie Carlson, Yolanda Churchill, Charlie Dahlberg, Norma Daugherty, Karen Eiseman, Deb Gortowski, John Hoyt, Gary Johnson, Leola LeGault, Jim McDowell, Terry Morgan, Dorian Robinson, Betty Jo Rodey, Wayne Spitzer, Carrie Steder, Carl Stoutenberg, Kamara Thomas, Brian Veitch, Nancy Warden, Danielle Wegner, and Gary Wegner, Jr.

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.



## PROGRAMS AND MINISTRIES THIS WEEK

Sunday	9:15am	Second Sunday of Christmas Worship
	10:15am	Fellowship
	10:30am	Forum: Fire Alarm System Update
	11:00am	Burmese Worship Service—Chapel
	1:00pm	New Life Worship Service-Conrad Room
Monday	9:30am	Book Study—Multipurpose Room
Tuesday	6:00pm	Church Council
Wednesday	8:00am	Bible Study—Stockholm Inn
Saturday	1:00pm	Ruthie's Kitchen
Sunday	9:15am	Second Sunday of Christmas Worship
	10:15am	Fellowship
	11:00am	Celebrating Dreams
	11:00am	Burmese Worship Service—Chapel
	1:00pm	New Life Worship Service-Conrad Room

## UPCOMING

January 11	11:00am	Celebrating Dreams Gospel Jamboree
January 18	10:30am	Annual Report Review
January 24	1:00pm	Ruthie's Kitchen
January 25	10:30am	Annual Congregational Meeting
January 31	Noon	Works of Faith—Kitchen & Fellowship Hall use until 4:00pm
February 18	Noon	Ash Wednesday Worship