

# JOIN ZION

WORSHIP AT 9:15AM

## NEW MEMBERS AND BAPTISM!

### ZION MEMBERSHIP MATERIALS

Annual Report  
Transfer Form  
Membership Commitment  
Zion Membership Record  
SHAPE inventory  
Small Catechism

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## A Mosaic Community Sharing the Grace of Christ



### ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH

925 FIFTH AVENUE - ROCKFORD, IL 61104

[WWW.ZIONROCKFORD.COM](http://WWW.ZIONROCKFORD.COM)

[www.facebook.com/zionlutheranrockford](https://www.facebook.com/zionlutheranrockford)

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

ZIONROCKFORD@GMAIL.COM

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PASTOR MICHAEL THOMAS

REVISED MARCH 20, 2025

# MISSION – VALUES – VISION

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1. MISSION - *Zion Lutheran Church is a mosaic community sharing the grace of Christ with all.*
2. VALUES – These key values are used in decision making.
  - Grace: Unconditional love and mercy
  - Outreach: Building bridges and partnerships at and beyond Zion to express Christian community with words and actions
  - Discipleship: Daily following the ways of Christ
  - Stewardship: We respond to the grace of Christ by sharing our time, talent and treasures
  - Community: Strengthening Christian relationships at and beyond Zion
  - Justice: Intentional advocacy, reconciliation, and building a community of peace
  - Inclusive: all cultures, classes, ethnicities, races, sexual orientation and gender identity
3. VISION
  - Discipleship – to foster spiritual growth with people connected to Zion through intentional discipleship training for all ages
  - Equipping Leadership – to identify, equip, and nurture leadership at and beyond Zion
  - Neighborhood Community Development – to strengthen and grow community partnerships by defining the roles and responsibilities for Neighborhood Community Development
  - Mosaic/diversity permeates and influences all – to celebrate, grow, and teach our diversity that it will permeate the life and leadership of the church
  - Worship –to expand opportunities for seeker friendly worship
  - Increase Participation – to develop, discover, deploy the gifts and talents of all those who are connected to Zion’s mission
  - Facility Modification –to form a task force to do a feasibility study and prioritize capital improvements

## BELIEFS OF LUTHERAN-CHRISTIANS

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A faith founded on good news - Lutherans are Christians who accept the teachings of Martin Luther (1483 – 1546). Luther was a German theologian who realized that there were significant differences between what he read in the Bible and the practices of the Roman Catholic church at that time. On October 31, 1517, he posted a challenge on the door of Wittenberg University, titled “95 Theses” (to debate 95 theological issues). His hope was that the church would reform its practice and preaching to be more consistent with the Word of God as contained in the Bible. What started as an academic debate escalated into a distinct separation between the Roman Catholic church of the time and those who accepted Luther’s suggested reforms. "Lutheran" became the name of the group that agreed with Luther’s convictions.

Today, nearly five centuries later, Lutherans still celebrate the Reformation on October 31 and still hold to the basic principles of Luther’s theological teachings, such as Grace alone, faith alone, Scripture alone. These comprise the very essence of Lutheranism:

- We are saved by the grace of God alone -- not by anything we do;
- Our salvation is through faith alone -- a confident trust in God, who in Christ promises us forgiveness, life and salvation
- The Bible is the norm for faith and life -- the true standard by which teachings and doctrines are to be judged.

# HISTORY OF ZION

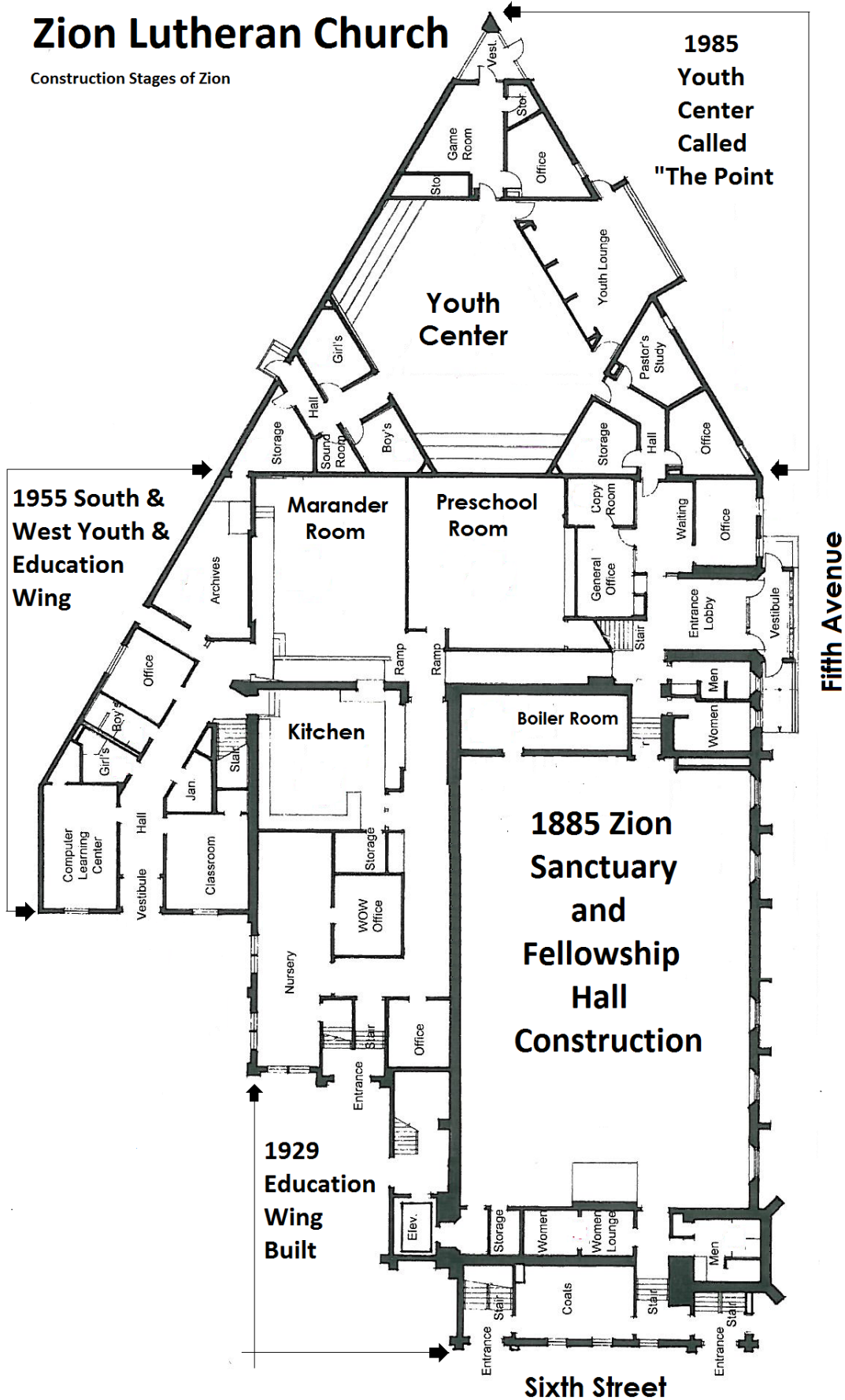
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1883	Zion Chartered out of First Lutheran Church
1884	Zion admitted to the Augustana Synod
1885	Church sanctuary and fellowship hall dedicated
1896	Church Bell Dedicated
1903	Church balcony built
1913	Church steeple added
1914	Women granted right to vote at Zion
1917-25	Formation of Tabor started from Zion leadership
1920	Two paintings on each side of new altar created
1921	English language services started
1929	Two story Education wing added
1931	New Altar completed
1938-42	Alpine Sunday School created/Alpine Church
1955	Education wing expanded and Chapel added; kitchen expanded; Sacristy and Choir area added
1956	Zion had largest Sunday School: Augustana Synod
1961	Elevator added
1970	First woman to serve on Church Council
1971	8.5 acres bought on Spring Creek, W. of Mulford
1977	Discontinued Swedish worship on Sunday
1978	Thrift Shop created
1981	Outreach to Laotian refugees started
1982	Zion Development Corporation formed
1983	Food Pantry created
1983	2 homes on 5th Avenue sold to Amcore: parking
1983	Church sells Spring Creek land
1985	Youth Center built: "The Point"
1995	Patriots Gateway Center created
2000	Bell Tower Carillon added
2005	Zion Outreach program formed
2009	Outreach to Burmese refugees started
2018	Ruthie's Kitchen was started
2020	Capital Fund Appeal—Ascension Window restored
2021	Patriots Gateway Community Center mortgage paid off
2024	First Same Sex Marriage at Zion

# HISTORY OF ZION

## Zion Lutheran Church

Construction Stages of Zion



# BELIEFS OF LUTHERAN-CHRISTIANS

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## BIBLE STUDY and DEVOTIONS

Jesus said: "...Teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." - Matthew 28:20

Bible Study - The Bible is the inspired Word of God

- Daily devotionals, reading/listening to the scriptures, sermon hearing, Bible study
- Principle of Law and Gospel (order; convicts us; points us)

Lutheran-Christian Theology is a faith rooted in a spirituality of daily dying to our will through Baptism and living in response to the grace of Christ. We are sinner and saint at same time and daily we are renewed as we remember that we are claimed by God in baptism.



Key Bible Verses

- John 3:16 - "For God so loved the world that God gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.
- Ephesians 2:8-10 - "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God; not the result of works, so that no one may boast. 10 For we are what God has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life."

## PRAYER

The early church in Acts 2:42 *"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."*

Prayer reminds us to call upon God and we can do this privately or in community; offer prayer concerns through the church Prayer chain, prayer time at worship, praying with others, pray highs and lows in groups and in study and daily life

Bible Passages about Prayer

- Psalm 14:4 - Calling Out to God
- Proverbs 2:1-5 - Pray for insight and wisdom
- Matthew 6:9-13 - Lord's Prayer in the Gospels
- Mark 14:36—Jesus in Gethsemane
- John 17:20-24 - Jesus prays for future disciples
- Romans 8:26-27 - Holy Spirit intercedes for us
- 1 Corinthians 10:13 - "God will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing God will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it."
- James 5:5 - Pray for others healing

Serenity Prayer - *"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time; enjoying one moment at a time; accepting hardship as the pathway to peace. Taking as He did, this sinful world as it is not as I would have it: trusting that He will make all things right if I surrender to His will, that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with Him forever in the next."*- Reinhold Niebuhr

# BELIEFS OF LUTHERAN-CHRISTIANS

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## Ten Commandments

The Ten Commandments are the basis for community and civil order. God has provided these for our good so that society and church community experience good order. The Ten Commandments provide the foundation for our lives in the world, community, church and family.

## About the Creed

The Apostles' Creed is the basis for our understanding God, the holy one who has created all life with order; who has forgiven us through Christ; and who empowers us through the Holy Spirit. The Apostles' Creed as we now have it dates from the eighth century. But in truth its roots are in the "Old Roman Creed," which was used in some parts of the ancient church as early as the third century. Before the "Old Roman Creed", in turn, were variations rooted in the New Testament itself. While this creed does not come from the apostles (Jesus's followers sent to share the good news), its roots are apostolic (in keeping with the teaching of the New Testament apostles). The creed describes the faith into which we are baptized and therefore is used in the rites of Baptism and Affirmation of Baptism.

## The Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer is our guide to call out to God. When we realize that we break the commandments, we then call upon God who in the words of the Apostles' Creed, invites us to know grace in Christ and to rely on the Holy Spirit to be present with us in our trials. The teaching of the Lord's Prayer reminds us that we can call upon God, our heavenly "abba".

## WORSHIP

1. "Jesus said to him, *"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind."* This is the greatest and first commandment." - Matthew 22:37-38
2. There is a basic pattern for worship. We *gather*. We encounter God's *Word*. We share a *meal* at the Lord's table. And we are *sent* into the world. Worship is fundamentally about what God is doing and our response to God's action. Worship is an encounter with God, who saves us through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Taken together, the **Word** proclaimed and the **sacraments** -- both Holy Baptism and Holy Communion -- are called **the means of grace**. Sometimes we describe worship as a "gathering around the means of grace."
3. Weekly community worship that is Trinitarian, contextual, liturgical, sacramental [Communion & Baptism -infant/adult] and frequent personal expressions
4. Sabbath: Sabbath means to stop; Third Command which is to "Remember the Sabbath day and keep it holy." – Exodus 20:8
5. Liturgical means work of the people: spoken public confession; singing; scripture reading; sacrament; prayer; and frequent personal expressions
6. Sacraments: sacred = holy (set apart); Gift of God's Grace - Physical Element Attached - Commanded by Christ = Holy Communion (real presence; open Communion) and Baptism (infant/adult)

# BELIEFS OF LUTHERAN-CHRISTIANS

## STEWARDSHIP

The early church in Acts 2:44-45 *“All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need.”*

Stewardship is our response to God’s generosity! We believe that everything we have is “holy currency” (see book by Eric Law). We believe that God created everything. We are called to be stewards of time, talents and treasures in response to God’s grace not as a requirement to earn God’s love. We acknowledge that everything belongs to God. We encourage “first fruit giving”, which means donating before you find out if you have enough. Zion is a generous church and in 2021, we gave 20% of our income to missions programs in the community and globally.

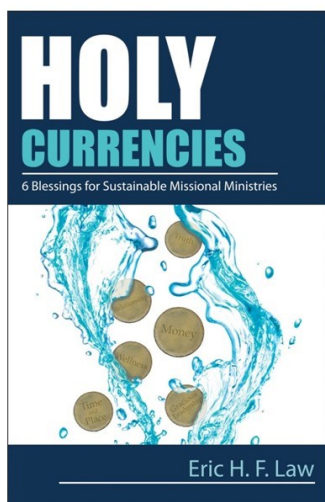
There are various ways people give financially.

1. **GENERAL MINISTRY FUND:** We give 10% of these funds to Mission Support for the Northern Illinois Synod & ELCA; we give 1% to Rockford Area Lutheran Ministries. The rest of these funds pay for program expenses, utilities and maintenance, administration and staff and other budget areas.
2. **SPECIAL MINISTRY FUNDS:** We provide members the chance to support various ministry partners at and beyond Zion.
3. **CAPITAL FUND APPEAL:** We ask members to prayerfully consider donating toward capital improvement projects at Zion in order to maintain the legacy of this space in this neighborhood for future generations.



There are various ways to express your generosity

1. Envelopes mailed to you quarterly
2. Pew envelopes
3. Simply Giving
4. Zion’s Website has a portal for giving
5. Smart Phones can use the “Vanco Plus” app to give



**Sustainable and Missional Ministry**

# BELIEFS OF LUTHERAN-CHRISTIANS

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## OUTREACH

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” - Matthew 28:19

Outreach beyond Zion clearly communicates the grace of Christ in word and deed. Review the Annual Report for the many outreach programs at and beyond Zion.

Outreach includes supporting and engaging in various social ministry programs at and beyond Zion’s community and neighborhood. We support many local mission programs and projects. We support various global mission projects in partnership with the ELCA.

Outreach includes reaching out to the FRANE (Friends, Relatives, Acquaintances, Neighbors & Enemies)

Outreach means clearly communicating with words:

- |                                |                                   |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Listening to the other :    | “What’s your faith background...” |
| 2. Telling Your Story (verbal) | “My faith means...”               |
| 3. Sharing God’s Story         | “Only by God’s grace...”          |

## SERVICE

“The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” - Ephesians 4:11-13

Serving others means being equipped by God for ministry in the home, community, church and world. Everyone has spiritual gifts and talents for the building up of the body of Christ.

The SHAPE inventory helps you to identify your Spiritual Gift, Heart, Abilities, Personality & Evangelism Style

You are called to serve at and beyond the church community. We are called to help you know the right role, for the right time, for the right person for the right reason. We invite you to pray and consider where you might serve at and beyond Zion, such as...

- Worship leader roles
- Committees and Ministry Teams
- Outreach ministry programs
- Education or youth areas
- Small group leadership



# MINISTRY PARTNERSHIPS



Cornucopia



Food Pantry



# WHAT IS THE ELCA?

During the past several hundred years, different Lutheran church bodies in the have been established to meet the needs of Lutherans in communities and nations all over the world. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America is the largest Lutheran group in North America, founded in 1988 when three North American Lutheran church bodies united: The American Lutheran Church, the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches and the Lutheran Church in America.



Lutherans are part of a reforming movement within the whole Christian church; as a part of practicing their faith, the ELCA and its predecessors have engaged in ecumenical dialogue with other church bodies for decades.

## FULL COMMUNION

The ELCA has entered into "full communion" agreements (sharing common convictions about theology, mission and worship) with several other Protestant denominations, including

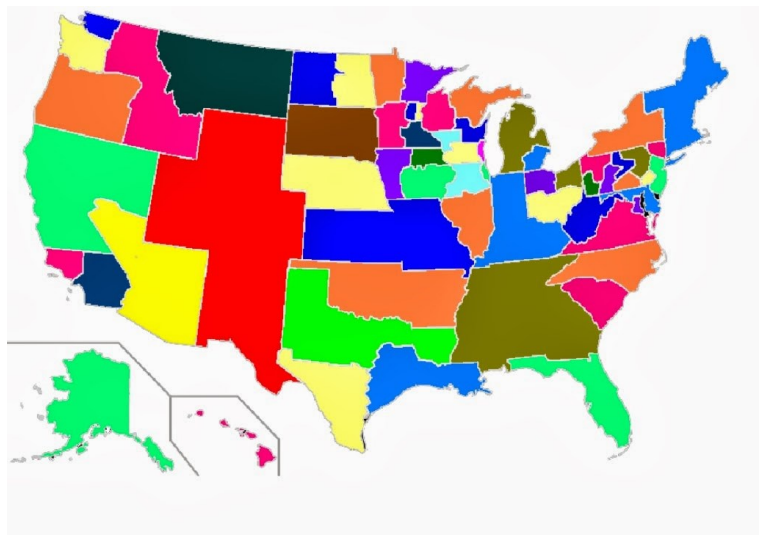
- the Moravian Church
- The Episcopal Church
- the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- the Reformed Church in America
- the United Church of Christ
- the United Methodist Church

The ELCA has an ongoing dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church, and in 1999, representatives of the Lutheran World Federation and the Roman Catholic Church signed the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification. This represented a historic consensus on key issues of faith and called for further dialogue and study together. Lutheranism is a faith tradition that is open to all, regardless of background. The ELCA alone is almost five million members strong, with nearly 10,500 congregations across the U.S., Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands.

Through programs, ministries and partnerships, the ELCA works every day to address inequities in political, economic and social systems—and to end conflict and violence all over the world. You can learn more about our efforts in this area on the website of the ELCA at [www. Elca.org](http://www.Elca.org).

As of December 31, 2020, there were 3.3 million baptized members in the ELCA. There were 8,900 congregations organized in 65 synods in nine geographic regions. Zion is part of the Northern Illinois Synod.

The ELCA is a diverse church body, becoming more so every day. This church is committed to growing in diversity and strengthening its global, ecumenical and interfaith relationships around the world. ELCA congregations are led by gifted men and women who have been called by God to serve their community. The ELCA calls both women and men to serve as pastors and lay rostered leaders.



Here are some facts about ELCA leaders:

- ⇒ As of December 31, 2018, there were 17,214 leaders on the ELCA roster including 1,213 Ministers of Word and Service and 16,001 Ministers of Word and Sacrament.
- ⇒ In 2018, nearly 32 percent of clergy on the ELCA roster were women.
- ⇒ In the ELCA's seven seminaries, the numbers of women and men preparing for ministry are about equal.
- ⇒ About 86 percent of ordained women and 83 percent of ordained men are actively serving in congregations.
- ⇒ The ELCA offers opportunities for Lutheran education at every level and considers education as an important part of our calling. We offer quality education at every level through our institutions. In addition to the seven ELCA seminaries and two seminary extension centers, there are 26 colleges and universities, 50 or more lifelong learning programs, 14 high schools, 296 elementary schools, 1,573 early childhood programs, 145 camp and retreat centers serving 450,000 annually.

The ELCA is committed to making the world a more just and peaceful place to live. Through programs, ministries and partnerships ELCA congregations, synods and the churchwide organization work every day to address inequities in political, economic and social systems and to end conflict and violence all over the world. We are a church that believes God is calling us into the world – together. This is Christ's church. There is a place for you here.

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton

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**Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in America**  
God's work. Our hands.

# SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

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## THE PROMISES OF GOD

- ⇒ You are Called by God
- ⇒ You are Forgiven by Christ
- ⇒ You are Empowered by the Holy Spirit

## THE GIFTS OF BAPTISM

1. Baptism is a SACRAMENT (sacred).
2. Three things that make up a sacrament:  
Gift of God's Grace; Physical Element Attached and it was Commanded by Christ
3. Baptism gives us FORGIVENESS.  
"When we were baptized, we died and were buried with Christ. We were baptized, so that, we would live a new life, as Christ was raised to life by the glory of God the Father." Romans 6:4
4. Baptism makes us God's CHILDREN.  
"So you are children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. And all who have been united with Christ in baptism have been made like Him." Galatians 3:26-27
5. In Baptism we are given forgiveness of SINS.  
"Each of you must turn from your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." Acts 2:38
6. Baptism is for CHILDREN & ADULTS!
7. A person is baptized ONCE!

## BAPTISM TERMS

- Rebirth - New beginning
- Baptism - Washing away of sin
- Original Sin - all of our have sin from birth
- Resurrection - Jesus was raised from the dead
- Children of God - We are adopted into God's family
- Sacrament - sacred, holy, set apart; an outward sign of the mystery of God's grace and mercy
- Catholic - the universal Christian church for all who believe in Jesus Christ.
- Renew - Daily we can remember our baptism

## BAPTISM BIBLE PASSAGES

Isaiah 53:6 - Like sheep we've go astray

Jeremiah 1:5 - I knew you in mom's womb

Matthew 28:16-20 - Great Commission

Luke 15:11-24 - Loving Father forgives son

John 17:11-20 - Jesus protected disciples

Ephesians 1:13 - Stamped with Holy Spirit

Psalms 139:13-16 - God knows me

Matthew 3:16-17 - This is my beloved Son

Mark 16:15-16 - Baptize and save

John 15:1-7 - Jesus is vine & we are branches

Acts 2:38 - repent and be baptized

Ephesians 4:5 - One Lord and one baptism

# Membership Covenant

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## Zion Lutheran Church

As a baptized member of God's family, trusting God's grace and mercy, and being in agreement with the Mission, Beliefs, Values, Vision and Structure of Zion Lutheran Church of Rockford, Illinois, members of Zion are led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the Zion church community as a committed active member. In doing so, you commit yourself to God and to the people at Zion.

1. We continue to grow in our Mosaic Community as we share the Grace of Christ with all
  
2. We will protect the unity of the church...
  - By acting in love toward other members
  - By using my words to build others up and refusing to gossip
  - By supporting the leadership, Pastor and staff of the congregation
  - By living a life of integrity, to God, myself, and others
  - By treating all equal regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, race, or class
  
3. We will commit ourselves as disciples by participating in ...
  - Worship regularly, receiving the sacraments in worship and openly hearing the word proclaimed
  - Fellowship opportunities that deepen our relationships in small groups, large group activities and sharing my personal faith with others
  - Serving through our spiritual gifts, interests, and passions at and beyond Zion
  - Prayer ministry for each other
  - Personal and community Bible Study
  - Generous giving of our first fruits to God
  - Outreach beyond Zion that clearly communicates the grace of Christ through local and global mission projects and sharing our faith story
  
4. As noted in the Zion Constitution, we understand that "All applications for confirmed membership shall be submitted to and shall require the approval of the Congregation Council" (C8.03). Membership at Zion means... "It shall be the privilege and duty of members of this congregation to make regular use of the means of grace, both Word and sacraments; live a Christian life in accordance with the Word of God and the teachings of the Lutheran church; and support the work of this congregation, the synod, and the Churchwide organization of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America through contributions of their time, abilities, and financial support as biblical stewards." (C8.04)
  
5. Not being able to fulfill this membership commitment may cause the Church Council to remove people from Zion Membership due to inactivity.

# ZION LUTHERAN CHURCH TEAMS AND LEADERS

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## LEADERSHIP TEAM

Our Ministers - All the People of Zion  
Senior Pastor Michael Thomas  
Student Pastor Rachel Perkins-Gama  
Pastor Emeritus Denver Bitner  
Pastor Uk—Burmese Community  
Office Manager & Finance Secretary: Jolyn Hess  
Outreach Coordinator & Deaconess Student: Janice Forrest  
Faith Community Nurse: Jori Roysdon  
Music Ministry Coordinator: Jodi Beach  
Custodians: Shanita Baker and Denzel Banks  
Worship Media: Kurt Brown

## COUNCIL MEMBERS

Michael Beert (Treasurer)  
Pam Bitner  
Bonnie Dahlberg (Secretary)  
Gary Fulkerson  
Debbie Gortowski  
Thomas Habing (Vice-President)  
Karen Kermgard  
Angeles Polcher  
Debbie Raymond  
Ron Simmons  
Kris Sommer (President)  
Neal Tolodxi  
Pastor Michael Thomas

## 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](mailto:zionrockfordfinances@gmail.com) for more information.

**VANCO**  
FAITH

