

Zion Lutheran Church
925 5th Avenue - Rockford, Illinois
December 28, 2025 at 9:15am
www.facebook.com/zionlutheranrockford

FIRST SUNDAY OF CHRISTMAS
HOLY INNOCENT



PRELUDE “It Came Upon A Midnight Clear” arr. By Mark Hayes

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

CONFESSION 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 “Joy to the World” Red Hymnal #267

1. Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth receive her king;
let ev'ry heart prepare him room and heav'n and nature sing,
and heav'n and nature sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and nature sing.
2. Joy to the earth, the Savior reigns! Let all their songs employ,
while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains, repeat the sounding joy,
repeat the sounding joy, repeat, repeat the sounding joy.
3. No more let sin and sorrow grow nor thorns infest the ground;
he comes to make his blessings flow, far as the curse is found,
far as the curse is found, far as, far as the curse is found.
4. He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the nations prove
the glories of his righteousness and wonders of his love,
and wonders of his love, and wonders, wonders of his love.

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.

Refrain

Go tell it on the mountain, over the hills and ev'rywhere;
go tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!

1 While shepherds kept their watching o'er silent flocks by night,
behold, throughout the heavens there shone a holy light. *Refrain*

2 The shepherds feared and trembled when, lo, above the earth
rang out the angel chorus that hailed our Savior's birth. *Refrain*

3 Down in a lonely manger the humble Christ was born;
and God sent us salvation that blessed Christmas morn. *Refrain*

PRAYER OF THE DAY

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us pray. O Lord God, you know that we cannot place our trust in our own powers. As you protected the infant Jesus, so defend us and all the needy from harm and adversity, 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 Isaiah 63:7-9

⁷ I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD, the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, because of all that the LORD has done for us and the great favor to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love. ⁸ For he said, “Surely they are my people, children who will not act deceitfully,” and he became their savior ⁹ in all their distress. It was no messenger or angel

but his presence that saved them; in his love and pity it was he who redeemed them; he lifted them up and carried them all the days of old.

Word of God. Word of Promise.

Thanks be to God.

PSALMODY “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

SECOND READING: Hebrews 2:10-18

¹⁰ It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹ For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, ¹² saying, "I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters; in the midst of the congregation I will praise you." ¹³ And again, "I will put my trust in him." And again, "Here am I and the children whom God has given me." ¹⁴ Since, therefore, the children share flesh and blood, he himself likewise shared the same things, so that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵ and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by the fear of death. ¹⁶ For it is clear that he did

not come to help angels but the descendants of Abraham.¹⁷ Therefore he had to become like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make a sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people.¹⁸ Because he himself was tested by what he suffered, he is able to help those who are being tested.

Word of God. Word of Promise.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

“Infant Holy, Infant Lowly”

Red Hymnal #276

1 Infant holy, infant lowly, for his bed a cattle stall;
oxen lowing, little knowing Christ the child is Lord of all.
Swiftly winging, angels singing, bells are ringing, tidings bringing:
Christ the child is Lord of all! Christ the child is Lord of all!

2 Flocks were sleeping, shepherds keeping vigil till the morning new
saw the glory, heard the story, tidings of a gospel true.
Thus rejoicing, free from sorrow, praises voicing, greet the morrow:
Christ the child was born for you! Christ the child was born for you!

The Holy Gospel according to Matthew, the 2nd Chapter.

Glory to you, O Lord.

GOSPEL: Matthew 2:13-23

¹³ Now after [the magi] had left, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, “Get up, take the child and his mother, and flee to Egypt, and remain there until I tell you, for Herod is about to search for the child, to destroy him.” ¹⁴ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt ¹⁵ and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.” ¹⁶ When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the magi, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under,

according to the time that he had learned from the magi.¹⁷ Then what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:¹⁸ “A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.”¹⁹ When Herod died, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said,²⁰ “Get up, take the child and his mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who were seeking the child’s life are dead.”²¹ Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel.²² But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go there. And after being warned in a dream, he went away to the district of Galilee.²³ There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, “He will be called a Nazarene.”

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

SERMON

Pastor Michael Thomas

SERMON SONG “Of The Father’s Love Begotten” Red Hymnal #295

1 Of the Father's love begotten ere the worlds began to be,
he is Alpha and Omega, he the source, the ending he,
of the things that are, that have been, and that future years shall see,
evermore and evermore.

2 Oh, that birth forever blessed, when the virgin, full of grace,
by the Holy Ghost conceiving, bore the Savior of our race,
and the babe, the world's redeemer, first revealed his sacred face,
evermore and evermore.

3 This is he whom seers in old time chanted of with one accord,
whom the voices of the prophets promised in their faithful word;
now he shines, the long-expected; let creation praise its Lord
evermore and evermore.

4 Let the heights of heav'n adore him; angel hosts, his praises sing;
pow'rs, dominions, bow before him and extol our God and King;
let no tongue on earth be silent, ev'ry voice in concert ring
evermore and evermore.

5 Christ, to thee, with God the Father, and, O Holy Ghost, to thee,
hymn and chant and high thanksgiving and unwearied praises be:
honor, glory, and dominion, and eternal victory
evermore and evermore! Amen

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 OFFERING & OFFERING

“The Little Drummer Boy” Jodi Beach & Jim McDowell

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 or you can click on the QR code



TABLE BLESSING “Lo, How A Rose E’er Blooming” (vs. 1)

Lo, how a rose e'er blooming; from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming as seers of old have sung,
it came, a flow'r so bright, amid the cold of winter,
when half-spent was the night.

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 Child Is This?”

Red Hymnal #296

1 What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?

Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
while shepherds watch are keeping? This, this is Christ the king,
whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!

2 Why lies he in such mean estate where ox and ass are feeding?

Good Christian, fear; for sinners here
the silent Word is pleading. Nails, spear shall pierce him through,
the cross be borne for me, for you; hail, hail the Word made flesh,
the babe, the son of Mary!

3 So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh;
come, peasant, king, to own him. The King of kings salvation brings;
let loving hearts enthrone him. Raise, raise the song on high,
the virgin sings her lullaby; joy, joy, for Christ is born,
the babe, the son of Mary!

“O Little Town of Bethlehem” Red Hymnal #279

1 O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep the silent stars go by;
yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light.
The hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.

2 For Christ is born of Mary, and, gathered all above
while mortals sleep, the angels keep their watch of wond'ring love.
O morning stars, together proclaim the holy birth,
and praises sing to God the king, and peace to all the earth!

3 How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n!
So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his heav'n.
No ear may hear his coming; but, in this world of sin,
where meek souls will receive him, still the dear Christ enters in.

4 O holy child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray;
cast out our sin, and enter in, be born in us today.
We hear the Christmas angels the great glad tidings tell;
oh, come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!

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 “Good Christian Friends Rejoice” Red Hymnal # 288

- 1 Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
give ye heed to what we say: Jesus Christ is born today;
ox and ass before him bow, and he is in the manger now.
Christ is born today! Christ is born today!
- 2 Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye hear of endless bliss: Jesus Christ was born for this!
He has opened heaven's door, and we are blest forevermore.
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!
- 3 Good Christian friends, rejoice with heart and soul and voice;
now ye need not fear the grave; Jesus Christ was born to save!
Calls you one and calls you all to gain the everlasting hall.
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

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 "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen" arr. By Mark Hayes

BAG FLUFFING

FOR CORNUCOPIA FOOD PANTRY

Fourth Monday at 1:00pm

Zion Lutheran Church – Youth Center!

Cornucopia



Food Pantry



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



HEADS UP, ANNUAL REPORTS - For those committee chairs, partners and staff we ask you to submit your annual report in writing or email to Jolyn at zionrockford@gmail.com. Please add any photos of events you have held throughout the year! We ask for these reports to be submitted as soon as possible. If you have any questions please contact Jolyn by email or phone the office.

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.	
Fellowship:	Bonnie Dahlberg
Reader:	
Music:	Jodi Beach
Usher:	Charlie Dahlberg

End of Year Giving—To have any givings counted for 2025, they must be in the office by 10:00am on December 30th to be credited for 2025. If you have any questions contact the office. Thank you!

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 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, Rockford Area Lutheran Ministries.
- ◇ For those who grieve the loss of loved ones: Eloise Anderson, Larry Hall and Darrell Lindstrom.
- ◇ 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	First Sunday of Christmas Worship
	10:15am	Fellowship
	11:00am	Burmese Worship Service—Chapel
	1:00pm	New Life Worship Service-Conrad Room
Monday	9:30am	Book Study—Multipurpose Room
Wednesday		Office Closed
Thursday		Office Closed
Saturday	1:00pm	Ruthie's Kitchen
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

UPCOMING

January 6	6:00pm	Church Council
January 10	1:00pm	Ruthie's Kitchen
January 11	11:00am	Celebrating Dreams Gospel Jamboree
January 17	12:00pm	Works of Faith—Kitchen & Fellowship Hall use until 4:00pm
January 18	10:30am	Annual Report Review
January 24	12:00pm	Ruthie's Kitchen
January 25	10:30am	Annual Congregational Meeting
February 18	Noon	Ash Wednesday Worship

