



GRAPEVINE

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

FEBRUARY 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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BAG FLUFFING

FOR CORNUCOPIA FOOD PANTRY

Fourth Monday at 1:00pm

Zion Lutheran Church - Youth Center!



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 FORUM
February 15, 2026

9:15am Installation
10:30am in Fellowship Hall

A CONVERSATION WITH RON CLEWER
THE NEW CEO OF ZION DEVELOPMENT

SEASONED SAINTS GROUP

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

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

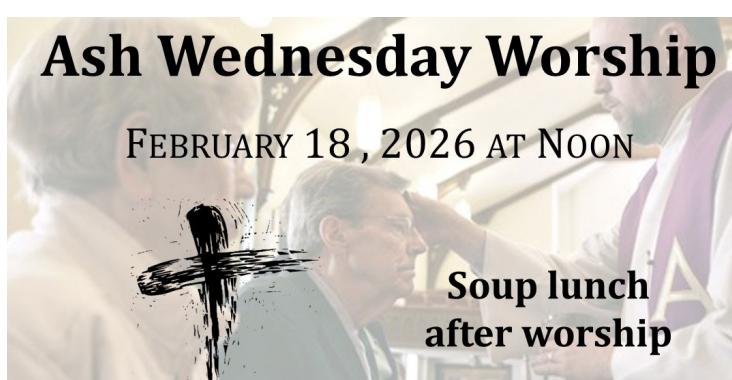
5:00-7:00pm

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



Ash Wednesday Worship

FEBRUARY 18, 2026 AT NOON



**Soup lunch
after worship**

FROM PASTOR MIKE

“LAOTIAN REUNION”—FEBRUARY 8TH”

Please join us for worship and Fellowship on Sunday, February 8th when we will gather for a “Laotian Reunion” at Zion. Pastor Bitner will be preaching and leading a conversation about the history of Zion’s outreach to the Laotian community during the late 1970’s and early 1980’s when these refugees were moving into the Rockford community and throughout the USA. Zion has been concerned for supporting immigrants and refugees for years. There will be great conversation and fellowship, including some delicious food.

RON CLEWER - CEO OF ZDC

Join us Sunday, February 15th at 9:15am when we will gather to install Ron Clewer, the new Managing Director and CEO of Zion Development. Ron started on January 1st with ZDC and is also partnering with Northwest Neighbors in looking at affordable housing in the Rockford community. Ron has a long history in the community in the area of affordable housing, including being the Executive Director of the Rockford Housing Authority. ZION Development is grateful to have this new partnership with PlatFORM group where Ron has linked ZDC in a creative management model for this new partnership. Ron will speak at the Adult Forum following worship, talking about housing concerns in our community.

FEB. 22ND FORUM: FIRE ALARM SYSTEM

At the Annual Meeting on January 25th, the Church voted to install a new Fire Alarm system for the entire church. The congregation voted to authorize the Church Council to spend up to \$200,000 from the Endowment restricted fund and/or take out a loan; and/or start a Capital Appeal to raise the funds needed for a complete new Fire Alarm system. We will be discussing this upgraded system on Sunday, February 22 after worship. This new system will ensure we can steward the ministries at Zion for years to come. If you have any questions, please let us know. Please prayerfully consider any special gifts toward this Capital Fund improvement. Please use your Capital Fund Envelopes for such donations!

“WE THE PEOPLE”

The Multicultural Committee has confirmed that we will be sponsoring our first ever Civil Rights Conference on April 18th with speaker, Mark Charles. This will be held at Patriots Gateway Community Center. This 2026 Civil Rights Conference is being called the “We The People” and Mark Charles will share his “Common Memory Tour”. Mark is a speaker, writer, and consultant. The son of an American woman (of Dutch heritage) and a Navajo man, Mark teaches the complexities of American history regarding race, culture, and Christendom in order to help forge a path of healing and conciliation for the nation. In 2012, Mark hosted a public reading at the US Capitol of the buried apology to Native peoples in the 2010 Department of Defense Appropriations Bill given by the 111th Congress. He is the co-author of the book, *Unsettling Truths: The Ongoing, Dehumanizing Legacy of the Doctrine of Discovery*, and he authors the blog *Reflections from the Hogan*. He has served on the boards of the Christian Reformed Church of North America and the Christian Community Development Association. In 2020 Mark ran as an independent candidate for the presidency of the United States, advocating for a Truth and Conciliation Commission – a formal and national dialogue on issues of race, gender, and class.

There will be time to hear Mark speak, attend a few workshops related to civil rights concerns of our time. A lunch is included in the cost of the event, held at Patriots Gateway Community Center. We are looking for sponsors and partners.

Mark will be our preacher on Sunday, April 19th at Zion and lead an Adult Forum at Zion. We are called to discern how “we the people” includes “all the people” in our diverse and beautiful community that is Rockford in the 21st century! Together, we can be a gateway of opportunity for all the people who live in our community. We are looking for sponsors and partners to support this event.

Peace, Pastor Thomas

STUDENT DEACONESS JANICE FORREST

At the December Church Council meeting, we approved the new Student Deaconess job at Zion. This role is a paid position that allows for the employment of our future Lutheran Deaconess student, Janice Forrest, as she has been called to serve in various congregational outreach ministries. The position will start at 20 hours a week and upon completion of Deaconess Certification, hours and pay will be revisited. The role as Outreach Director role is paid by Zion Outreach as she will continue to serve at the Ruthie's Kitchen/Ruthie's Closet outreach programs.

This ministry leadership includes serving as part of the worship leadership each Sunday in various capacities, preaching once a month, participate in all staff and Church council meetings; continue to lead the WOW program and support the Prayer Team and prayer list. She will provide some pastoral care to those in need at the hospital or on the phone and visit a few shut-ins. Pastor will meet with her weekly and she will attend various committees.

Janice will participate in ELCA activities, including the North Conference meetings, Synod Assembly, the Professional Leadership Conference and Congregational Resource Event. She will have regular office hours on Tuesday and Wednesday and have a day off on Monday. She will have a quarterly day of retreat and have eight Sundays off a year. If you have any questions about this transition, please let Pastor know.



FAITH COMMUNITY NURSE JORI

Hello everyone! I hope you all had a wonderful holiday and a great start to the New Year! February is American Heart Month. According to the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute as of January 7th 2026 heart disease is the leading cause of death in the U.S. To lower your risk of heart disease or decrease the progression of it, here are some activities you can do:

- Get 7-9 hours of uninterrupted sleep, if you're able to
- Eat healthy foods like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats or fish, low carbohydrate options, fat free or low-fat yogurt, or nuts instead of high processed sugary foods or snacks (read nutrition labels on foods to pick options that are low fat, low sodium (salt), low carb and sugar). Low carb and sugar options will help control your blood sugar, which helps prevent and control the progression of heart disease. Consider a food diary if you feel that you need to closely monitor what you're eating
- Quit smoking, if this applies to you. The first step is deciding you want to quit and developing a plan to quit. Visit smokefree.gov or download the app quitSTART for more information
- Check your blood pressure regularly, log it daily at home, and keep an eye on it. High blood pressure left untreated increases the risk of developing heart disease and progressing if you already have it
- Decrease stress as much as possible and make time for self-care to alleviate stress. Make plans with friends and spend time together, practice deep breathing, spend time in quiet prayer or outdoors, or journal
- Exercise!! I am going to be teaching exercise class with other faith community nurses during the Lenten season! The first class will be held 2/25/26 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church 11a-11:45a right before Lenten services begin. Dress comfortably, bring some water and a friend! If this opportunity doesn't work with your schedule, I teach another exercise class Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9a-10a at St. Bridget Catholic Church in the Parish Hall, Classroom A. Hope to see you there! Simply walking around your home, cleaning, or stretching all counts as exercise! You only have one body, please take care of it! If you or a loved one are in the hospital, rehab, or other facility please call me or the church and let me know. I will come see you if able and make sure you have what you need for next steps and support you on your health journey! If any of you have any questions or concerns, need health resources, or need to meet with me, please call me at 630-465-2135 or email me at Jori.L.Roysdon@osfhealthcare.org. Blessings to you and your loved ones!



Peace, Jori Roysdon, Parish Nurse

2026 Midtown Midweek Lenten at Noon

Conversations With Jesus

EXERCISE CLASS BEFORE WORSHIP & SIMPLE LUNCH AFTER WORSHIP

February 25 at Calvary Lutheran Church at Noon

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 at Emmanuel Lutheran Church at Noon

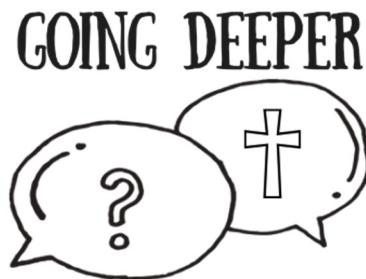
Preacher: Pastor Leslie Aska

March 25 at First Lutheran Church at Noon

Preacher: Pastor Bill Dahlberg

CONVERSATIONS WITH JESUS

LENT 2026





Please join us:

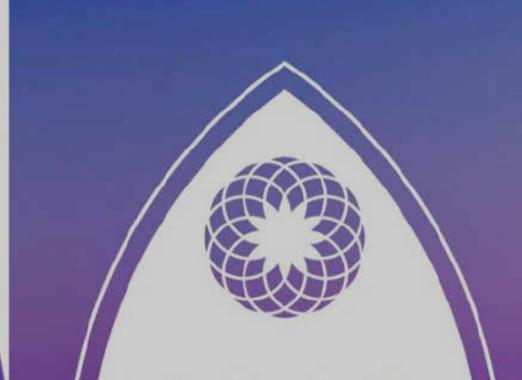
February 25th at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in the Library!

March 4th at Salem Lutheran Church in the Fireside Room!

March 11th at Zion Lutheran Church in the Fellowship Hall!

March 18th at Emmanuel Lutheran Church in the Library!

March 25th at First Lutheran Church in the Friendship Hall!



Lenten Exercise Class

Led by: OSF Faith Community Nurses

Classes will be held from 11am-1145am at designated Midtown Lutheran Churches!

All are welcome!

OTHER



Ruthie's Kitchen



RUTHIE'S KITCHEN

Community Meal on Saturday 1:00-3:00pm

GROUPS SERVING IN FEBRUARY

- February 7 Helping Hands
- February 14 St. Bernadette's
- February 21 Zion's Multicultural Team
- February 28 Midtown Health Team

Held at Zion Lutheran Church - 925 Fifth Avenue - Rockford, IL 61104
815-964-4609 - www.zionrockford.com

KATIE'S CUP CONVERSATIONS

"Book Banning & Censorship?"

February 10, 2026
Tuesday at Noon

Speaker: Morgan Yordy, Rockford Public Library
Teen Services Librarian

JOIN US FOR LUNCH STARTING AT 11:30AM.
KATIE'S CUP - 502 SEVENTH STREET - ROCKFORD, IL 61104 - WWW.KATIESCUP.COM



ZION FORUM
March 8, 2026
9:15am Greeting
10:30am in Fellowship Hall

A CONVERSATION WITH RABBIN BINAH WING
Temple Beth-El Synagogue

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

"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

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 or call Zion at 815-964-4609!

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



A KATIE'S CUP & RVC PARTNERSHIP

"Protest & Policy Change"

by Pastor Violet Johnicker

Thursday, February 19

1:00 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Rock Valley College
CENTER FOR LEARNING IN RETIREMENT

Register through RVC!
Call 815-921-3933 or email
T.Lewis@rockvalleycollege.edu
The cost is \$5 for anyone 50 and older
HELD at Katie's Cup



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



MONDAY BIBLE STUDY

AT 9:30AM AT ZION

WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

AT 8:00AM AT STOCKHOLM INN



FEBRUARY 2026 CALENDAR

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|---|--|---|--|---------------------|--|
| 1 9:15am Worship 1:00pm RALM Annual Meeting | 2 9:30am Book Study - Library | 3 8:00am Bible Study - Stockholm Inn | 4 8:00am Bible Study - Stockholm Inn | 5 | 6 Office Closed | 7 1:00pm Ruthie's Kitchen (Helping Hands) |
| 8 9:15am Worship - Laotian Reunion 10:15am Forum: Pastor Bitner and the History of Laotian Ministry at Zion | 9 9:30am Book Study – Library 3:00pm Women's Circle at Stockholm Inn | 10 8:00am RVC-ESL Class – Marander Room Noon—Katie's Cup Conversation 1:30pm Multicultural Team | 11 8:00am RVC-ESL Class – Marander Room 8:00am Bible Study - Stockholm Inn 11:00am Missions Team Meeting 6pm - Simmons Scholarship Team | 12 8:00am RVC-ESL Class – Marander Room 1:00pm Rachel's Circle -Library 4:00pm Katie's Cup Board 5:30pm Zion Development Board | 13 Office Closed | 14 9:30am Mary Norman Visitation 11:00am Mary Norman Memorial Service 1:00pm Ruthie's Kitchen Held at Patriots (St. Bernadette's) |
| 15 9:15am Worship 10:15am Forum: ZDC CEO Ron Clewer | 16 9:30am Book Study – Library Noon IL Synod Secre-tary Luncheon – Youth Center | 17 8:00am RVC-ESL Class – Marander Room 3:30pm Building and Grounds | 18 8:00am RVC-ESL Class – Marander Room 8:00am Bible Study - Stockholm Inn Noon Ash Wednesday Worship and Soup Lunch afterwards | 19 Grapevine Mailing 8:00am RVC-ESL Class – Marander Room 11:00am Finance Committee | 20 Office Closed | 21 1:00pm Ruthie's Kitchen (Zion Multicultural Team) |
| 22 9:15am Worship 10:15am Forum: Fire Alarm System | 23 9:30am Book Study - Library 1:00pm Bag Fluffing - Fellowship Hall | 24 8:00am RVC-ESL Class – Marander Room 5:00pm HR Committee 6:00pm Church Council | 25 8:00am RVC-ESL Class – Marander Room 8:00am Bible Study - Stockholm Inn Noon-MTLP Lenten Service – Calvary (at Emmanuel) | 26 8:00am RVC-ESL Class – Marander Room 4:30pm Patriots Board | 27 Office Closed | 28 1:00pm Ruthie's Kitchen (Midtown Health Team) |
| 1 9:15am Worship | 2 9:30am Book Study - Library | 3 8:00am RVC-ESL Class – Marander Room | 4 8:00am RVC-ESL Class – Marander Room | 5 8:00am RVC-ESL Class – Marander Room | 6 Office Closed | 7 9:00am Congregational Resourcing Event 1:00pm 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, Linda Callahan, Bonnie Dahlberg, Gary Fulkerson, Thomas Habing, Karen Kermgard, Laurie Pellant, Angeles Polcher, Ron Simmons, Pastor Michael Thomas, Neal Tolodxi and Gary Zeien

Church Council Officers

President: Bonnie Dahlberg

Vice-President: Tom Habing

Treasurer: Michael Beert

Secretary: Laurie Pellant

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 Fidlar, 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: Mary Norman.
- ◊ For healing: Colette Buchert, Norm Buchert, Linda Callahan, Marjorie Carlson, Yolanda Churchill, Charlie Dahlberg, Norma Daugherty, Karen Eisman, Deanna Hartenberg, John Hoyt, Leola LeGault, Jim McDowell, Les Morgan, Betty Jo Rodey, Wayne Spitzer, Carrie Steder, Deb Tolodxi, Neal Tolodxi, Brian Veitch, Nancy Warden, Diane Wegner, 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.

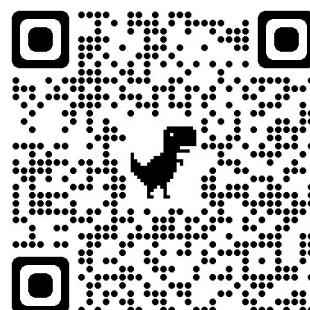
GRAPEVINE DEADLINE FOR THE MARCH 2026 GRAPEVINE, EMAIL BY FEBRUARY 11, 2026 to submit an article: zionrockford@gmail.com, or please send a hardcopy to the church office.

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.

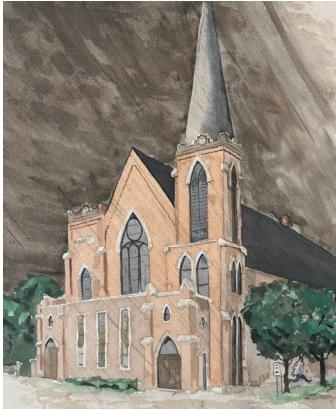
VANCO
FAITH



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zionrockford@gmail.com

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Place mailing label here.

Annual Meeting



GRAPEVINE

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