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# The Zion Spirit



*"Grounded in Christ: Sent to be a blessing"*

December 2018



## Christmas and the Cross

We often sentimentalize Christmas. We enjoy the nostalgia of the nativity scene, the thought of snow softly falling to make a white Christmas, enjoy the songs and gifts and more. There is nothing wrong with this. But it is a limited view of a much more complex reality. Christmas is about more than nostalgia. Christmas is about more than the chance to give and receive presents.

When the first Christmas happened, a migrant family was traveling in order to fulfill orders from an oppressive government. People were to leave their homes and travel to places where their ancestors had come from in order to be counted. Mary and Joseph were two poor travelers who were forced to relocate at a most inconvenient time – Mary was pregnant with her first child and as she traveled the day of the child's arrival was fast approaching. Unable to afford good accommodations and with inns full, they eventually settled in a stable with the animals. There, Mary gave birth to Jesus, wrapped him in bands of cloth, and lay him in a feeding trough with the animals.

It would not be long before another oppressive leader, King Herod, would hear about the birth of this peasant king. Unwilling to risk his own lineage, Herod ordered all the baby boys under age two killed. But warned in a dream that Jesus was in danger, Joseph took Jesus and fled the horrors of the killing spree and went to be a refugee in Egypt. His experience must have mirrored the same kinds of fears that many who are fleeing to our country from parts of Mexico and Central America feel today.

So, Jesus was born into poverty, oppressed and targeted by a cruel and oppressive government, and fled as a refugee – all in the first two years of his life. There are not too many sweet songs or nostalgic pictures to remember these aspects of his life, but they are central to it.

All of this should serve to remind us that much about Jesus is less nostalgic than we would like to think. Opposition to his mission began when he was

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a baby. It would continue in many ways throughout his adult life. Jesus would clash with official, temple priests and the religious rulers of his day over and over again. Each time, he would find a way to share a message that God was changing the world and that the coming of Jesus was not intended to leave things the way they were but to bring new and lasting changes.

By the end of his life, Jesus would be a source of anxiety for a lot of people in power. Pontius Pilate would end up being the one to announce his crucifixion, but the religious leaders, King Herod, and most of the people in the crowds would be in favor of the punishment.

Christmas is not an end in itself. Nor are all the traditions we enjoy at Christmas ones that tell the whole story. This is written here, not to inspire us to feel guilty or prevent us from enjoying Christmas. But as we do, we should all pause from time to time throughout the holiday season and remember that Jesus didn't come to usher in Santa Claus. Jesus came to change the world. Jesus came because "God so loved the world..." We see that begin at Christmas. We see the outcome on Good Friday and Easter. There is no cross without Christmas – Jesus had to be born to die. But there is no Christmas without the cross – the child will grow into the crucified and risen Lord.

## **Christmas Program – December 16<sup>th</sup>**

We've scheduled the Sunday for this year's Christmas Program to be December 16<sup>th</sup>. This year's program will be a new format and we are excited about it. We'll be using a story from our Godly Play program to provide the structure. Each step of the way, as the story unfolds, kids and adults will add narration, action, symbols and more as the story tells about the birth of Jesus. In addition, special music offered from children and adults, special choir pieces, and some congregational singing will mean lots of good music and participation as the program shares the good news that Christ is born. This is always a special Sunday for Zion and this year promises to be a neat way to enjoy the Christmas Program. Plan to come and be sure to invite family and friends to join you!

## **Poinsettias for Worship**

If you'd like to help make Zion's sanctuary beautiful for Christmas, you can help by donating a poinsettia. The flowers will arrive on December 23rd and you may begin to take them home after the 11PM service on Christmas Eve. The cost for these will once again be \$12. Donations of poinsettias need to be in by Sunday, December 16th so we can complete the order. Thanks!

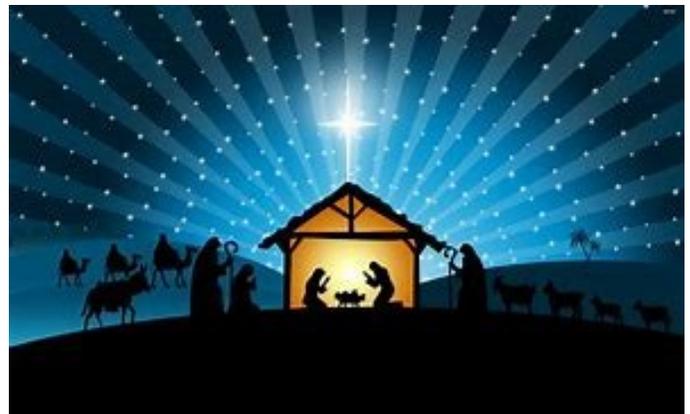


## **Christmas Eve Worship**

This year, Christmas Eve falls on a Monday evening. On this most holy night of the year, people all around the world gather to honor the arrival of God in the flesh – the birth of Jesus! We always have a meaningful service and this year's service will be no exception. Both services will include candle lighting to "Silent Night" to conclude the worship.

The worship schedule will be:

- 5:00 PM – Family Friendly Christmas Eve (nursery available) with Holy Communion
- 11:00 PM – Christmas Eve Worship with Holy



# DECEMBER 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						<b>1</b> 09:30 AM-Prayer Shawl 10:00 AM-AA 02:00 PM-AA Planning Mtg
<b>2</b> 08:30 AM-Worship 09:45 AM-Sun. School 10:00 AM-Adult Ed 10:45 AM-Worship 12:00 PM-Youth Group 04:30 PM-AA Dist 22	<b>3</b> 07:00 PM-SWAN Board Mtg	<b>4</b> 05:30 PM-Soup Kettle - Zion Serves 08:00 PM-AA	<b>5</b> Office Closed 05:00 PM-Choir 06:00 PM-Praise Team 07:00 PM-AA	<b>6</b> 02:00 PM-Peacemakers	<b>7</b> Office Closed 06:30 PM-AA Study 08:00 PM-AA	<b>8</b> 10:00 AM-AA 08:00 PM-AA 3:00 PM Daubert/Ramirez Wedding
<b>9</b> 08:30 AM-Worship 09:45 AM-Sun. School 10:00 AM-Adult Ed 10:45 AM-Worship	<b>10</b> 06:30 PM-Council Mtg	<b>11</b> 05:30 PM-Soup Kettle 08:00 PM-AA	<b>12</b> Office Closed 05:00 PM-Choir 06:00 PM-Praise Team 6:30PM Catechism 07:00 PM-AA	<b>13</b> 10:00 AM-Befriender 02:00 PM-Peacemakers	<b>14</b> Office Closed 06:30 PM-AA Study 08:00 PM-AA	<b>15</b> 10:00 AM-AA 08:00 PM-AA
<b>16</b> Newsletter Articles Due 08:30 AM-Worship 09:45 AM-Sun. School 10:00 AM-Adult Ed 10:45 AM-Worship	<b>17</b> 06:30 PM-SWAN (LL)	<b>18</b> 10:00 AM-Ladies Bible Study 05:30 PM-Soup Kettle 08:00 PM-AA	<b>19</b> Office Closed 05:00 PM-Choir 06:00 PM-Praise Team 07:00 PM-AA	<b>20</b> 02:00 PM-Peacemakers	<b>21</b> Office Closed 06:30 PM-AA Study 08:00 PM-AA	<b>22</b> 10:00 AM-AA 08:00 PM-AA
<b>23</b> 08:30 AM-Worship 09:45 AM-Sun. School 10:00 AM-Adult Ed 10:45 AM-Worship	<b>24</b> 05:00 PM-Christmas Eve Worship 11:00 PM-Christmas Eve Worship	<b>25</b> Christmas 05:30 PM-Soup Kettle - Zion Serves 08:00 PM-AA	<b>26</b> Office Closed 05:00 PM-Choir 06:00 PM-Praise Team 07:00 PM-AA	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Office Closed 06:30 PM-AA Study 08:00 PM-AA	<b>29</b> 10:00 AM-AA 08:00 PM-AA
<b>30</b> 08:30 AM-Worship 09:45 AM-Sun. School 10:00 AM-Adult Ed 10:45 AM-Worship	<b>31</b> New Year's Eve 04:00 PM-Alcothan					

## Advent Themes:

Advent is a time of preparation and anticipation. The paraments are blue – the color of hopefulness. If you look at the rose shaped stained glass window in front of Zion’s sanctuary you will see the background around the white rose is blue. Luther believed that Christians are, by faith, intrinsically hopeful. Advent’s blue is the color of Advent and its usage comes from the Scandinavian traditions of the church (Zion’s original founders were Norwegians).

During Advent there are four weeks of preparation as we look ahead to Christmas and the birth of Christ. These four weeks have various themes that are used to celebrate them. At Zion, we have four banners that come from the most common themes for the Advent season. Each week we light another candle on the Advent wreath and count down the weeks until Christmas.

The four themes we use are: hope, love, joy and peace. Each week, one of these themes will be lifted up in the responsive reading that is used to light the candle for the week. Each week a banner will be added to the sanctuary. And each week we will prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Christ. Please to be in worship each week as we celebrate Advent.

## Hanging of the Greens

One of the Advent traditions we have at Zion is the hanging of the greens. This old tradition has been adopted by us and given a few twists as we allow Advent to unfold as we prepare the sanctuary for the coming of Christmas.

This year, Advent begins on December 2<sup>nd</sup> and we will bring out the Advent Wreath and also hang wreaths on each of the hooks around the sanctuary side walls. Then on December 9<sup>th</sup> we will bring out the trees and chrismos (special tree decorations with symbolic meanings that share a bit about who Christ is). We’ll also bring the white gifts forward that day. Then, on December 16<sup>th</sup> we will add the shepherd’s staff and share the story of the candy cane as a symbol for Jesus at Christmas. Finally, on December 23<sup>rd</sup> the Poinsettias will be here and the sanctuary will be ready for Christmas!

Come be a part of the fun and the unfolding of Advent as we get the sanctuary ready for the birth of Christ!

## BIBLE READINGS for December

### December 2

1 Samuel 17:41-50 (sermon text)  
John 14:9-14

### December 9

Psalms 32 (sermon text)  
Matthew 23:8-12

### December 16

Isaiah 12:2-6 (sermon text)  
Luke 3:10-18

### December 23

Micah 5:2-5 (sermon text)  
Luke 1:46-55

### December 24

Isaiah 9:2-7 (sermon text)  
Luke 2:1-14

### December 30

Colossians 3:12-17 (sermon text)  
Luke 2:41-52

## DECEMBER VERSE OF THE MONTH

Be glad in the Lord and rejoice,  
O righteous, and shout for joy,  
all you upright in heart.

**Psalm 32:11**



If you have concerns or joys to share, please call the church office at 847-888-2882 and press 2 to place a request on the prayer line.



### Amanda Fraas to Present About Madagascar—Dec. 9th

Last year, Amanda Fraas was part of the ELCA’s Young Adults in Global Mission program. We sponsored her as a congregation to help her spend a year in Madagascar. It was quite a year and Amanda did and learned a lot. She is going to be at Zion on Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup> at 9:45 AM to share a program that tells what she learned and experienced during her time there. We know you’ll want to hear all about it so plan to be here and learn a bit more about how Amanda was a part of helping our congregation connect with people in another part of God’s wonderful world!

### Christmas Shop at Amazon? Use Amazon Smile and Support Zion!

Many of us shop online now. Amazon has a charity support portal that allows you to do your same purchasing online at Amazon but designate 0.5% of the sales to Zion. Instead of going to Amazon.com to shop, simply use <https://smile.amazon.com/> to do exactly the same thing. This Amazon portal accesses the same products and prices (nothing will even look different) but before you shop, simply select a charity to support and Amazon will donate a portion to the charity of your choice. Select Zion Lutheran Church and help make ministry happen here. Thanks!

*Thank You!*

### Gary Anliker Steps Down as Secretary

Fourteen years ago, Gary Anliker began as Zion’s office secretary. He has done a great job and the office is capable of many things that it could not have ever done without him. But he has decided that it is time to retire and make time for other things. A big thank you to Gary for his faithful service and willingness to go above and beyond in so many ways. We will be looking for a new secretary in the weeks ahead, but the office will be very different without him. Gary, thanks for your service here.

### Financial Report

Oct	Income	Expenses
General	\$17,167	\$13,901
Building Fund	\$688	\$868
YTD	Income	Expenses
General	\$176,611	\$212,581
Building Fund	\$11,886	\$8,680

Note: Expenses includes about \$26,000 for the roof and water drainage projects that were done.



### Planned Giving Workshop Coming January 12<sup>th</sup>

Planning our giving is an important act of faithful stewardship. What will happen to our resources after we are gone? Where do we want them to go and what legacy will we leave for those who follow us?

On Saturday, January 12<sup>th</sup>, we will host planned giving presenter Tim Urness from the ELCA church-wide offices. He will present a program to help each of us reflect on what we have and what we’d like to do with it to form our legacy. We will begin at 11:30 with a program and then follow with a light lunch. All are invited to attend. It will give you much to think about and provide a wide range of very helpful information for you, your family, and the things you care most about.

## White Gifts

Zion has received the names of 50 children from U-46 who are homeless or near homeless and who have been identified by school social workers. They are called white gifts because each gift is wrapped in white to look the same as one another...no gift is better than another. We ask that those interested take a name or two and purchase gifts in the amount of \$30, wrap the gift in white paper (often the backside of regular wrapping paper) and bring it in by December 9. If you would prefer to donate money, (\$35 to cover tax and wrapping paper), please sign up for a particular child and give the money (make checks out to Zion) and name to Deacon Marlene. The youth group will be shopping for gifts on December 2. Thanks!

## Youth Group

It's time to go shopping! December 2 we will be going out to lunch following the second service and then shopping for white gifts. After shopping is complete, we head back to Zion to wrap gifts, share some snacks and play some games. We will plan to end at 4:00 PM. Please bring a snack to share.

## Children's Ministry Update

Godly Play is going very well!

One new thing that we have added to Godly Play is offering envelopes during our Feast Time (group snack), which comes towards the end of the Godly Play routine. This addition will help children understand and practice the importance of giving. Children will discuss and select a ministry to support with the money collected at the end of the school year. If your child does not have a box of offering envelopes, let me know!

The After School program called is also doing well! We have room for a few more children and volunteers. Registration information can be found in the overflow space or on Zion's web site.

Dianha Ortega-Ehreth, Coordinator for Children and Family Ministries

dianhaoe@gmail.com or 773-860-0588 (cell)

## Upcoming Events

- Jan 12 – Planned giving speaker and lunch (11:30 – 1:00)
- Feb 9 – Chili Cookoff
- Feb 23 – Spiritual Gifts Workshop (afternoon)
- Mar 2 – Spaghetti Dinner
- Mar 6 – Ash Wednesday. Lent begins
- Mar 13 thru Apr 10 - Weds. evening Lenten study and worship
- April 18 - Maundy Thursday meal and worship
- April 19 – Good Friday worship
- April 21 - Easter
- June 16-21 - Confirmation Camp



## AA to Host "Alcothon" New Year's Eve Party

One of the challenging times for people who are struggling with alcohol addictions are holidays like New Year's Eve. On these dates, parties are the norm and many people are enjoying drinks, popping champagne corks, and often over indulging.

An annual tradition for our Alcoholics Anonymous groups is to host an alcohol free New year's Eve party. Once again, Zion will be the site for this New Year's Eve event. If you or someone you know would like to attend, all are welcome. The party begins with dinner and a potluck around 6 PM and goes all night (yes, all night!).

### SUNDAY SCHEDULE

- 8:30 a.m. Worship/ Holy Communion
- 9:45 a.m. Sunday School
- 10:00 a.m. Adult Education