

CONNECTIONS

Website: ZionsLuth.org | (719) 846-7786 | Email: zionsluth@gmail.com

Zion's Worship

Services 10 a.m. Sundays,
510 Pine Street Trinidad

Opportunities

First-Sunday Potluck:

Dec. 7, following worship.
All are welcome.

Advent Soup Suppers:

Food & Reflection, 6 p.m.
Wednesdays in Advent.

Blue Christmas Worship:

Special Worship at 5:30
p.m., Saturday, Dec. 21.

Christmas Eve Worship:

Candlelight service at
7 p.m. Wednesday,
Dec. 24.

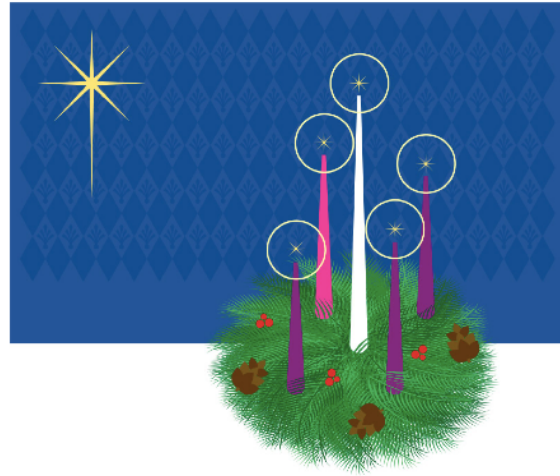
Church Council: Meeting
Sunday, Dec. 14.

5-Loaves Deliveries:

Saturday, Dec. 27,
volunteers needed.



**A Reconciling in Christ
Community**



Christmas & Advent

By Pastor John Strecker-Baseler

I come from a long line of Lutheran pastors. From my family ancestors, seminary, and personal parish experience – here is what I can tell you about Advent and Christmas.

The Season of Advent includes the four Sundays before Christmas, December 25. Advent was observed by the early Christians with the focus on the Second Coming of Christ. When I was little, the Church used the color purple during Advent -like the season of Lent - as a solemn time of considering the coming of Jesus and Judgement Day. Now, the color is blue to focus on Hope. (The change to blue for Advent came in 1978 with the Lutheran Book of Worship, the green hymnal.)

To understand Advent, the Coming of the Lord, is to reflect on the history of the relationship of humanity and God. In Creation, God created us out of love and wanted us to love God and each other; but, with the Free Will decision of Adam & Eve, Humanity disobeyed God and Fell from Grace (Genesis 3).

(Continued on page 2)

Serving Zion's

Church Council:

- ✦ Kathy Broman, financial secretary
- ✦ Norine Hazen
- ✦ Cherie Holder
- ✦ Mary McKenna, secretary
- ✦ Mike McNeil, president
- ✦ Julie Morris
- ✦ Mark Moss, vice president
- ✦ Terri Watson, trust fund
- ✦ Julie Wersal, treasurer

Staff:

The Rev. Lisa Rygiel, Pastor
Jo Moss, Assistant to Clergy

Standing Committee

Oversight:

5 Loaves/Thanksgiving — Norine Hazen

Altar Preparation — John Rygiel

Angels in Aprons — Cherie Holder & Julie Morris

Building & Grounds — John Rygiel

Card Ministry — Lynn Chase

Communion Bread — Cherie Holder

Directory — Julie Wersal

Facebook — Sharon Sorenson

Flower Team — Mary McKenna

Newsletter & Website — Jo Moss

Safety & Security — Mary McKenna

Worship & Music — Pr. Lisa Rygiel

Worship Support (ushers, lectors, communion, worship prep) — Pr. Lisa Rygiel

Advent & Christmas... (Continued from page 1)

An Eschatology (the study of the End-of-the-World) Theologian recently wrote, "God continues to pour more and more love (upon humanity) and the warmth of that love brings the temperatures of the earth to extreme limits, for the fragility of humanity cannot take the heat of it."

The End of Time may be near as the teachings of Jesus are ignored by so many (especially those in power).

As Lutherans, we understand our sin and our salvation from the apostle Paul's letter to the Romans 3:23-24: "23 [S]ince all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; 24 they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." And through John 3:16-17: "16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. 17 Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him."

For Martin Luther, our response to the Gospel is very important. During Advent we encourage Lutherans to WATCH, WAIT, PREPARE and HOPE for the Second Coming of the Lord by following the teachings Jesus shared with his disciples in Matthew 25:31-40. That is how we are prepared for the Advent of our Lord.

Christmas, then is the time to relax, reflect and marvel at the joy of the First Coming of God-in-human form, Immanuel, God with us, Jesus, our Savior. Born to save us from sin and to set us free to be the people of God.

Christmas Day is the first day of this 12-day season ending on the Day of Epiphany, January 6.

May you and all whom you love wait with Hope, prepared for the Advent of Christ; and then, celebrate the Joy of the Savior born to us this Christmas Season.

Zion's Welcomes New Members

Zion's will welcome new members during worship on Sunday, Dec. 14.

If you are interested in becoming a member of Zion's please let Pr. Lisa know.



December

2025



Lectors

Ushers

7 Jody Alford	7 Jody Alford & Cheryl Leef
14 John Strecker-Baseler	14 Tracy Wahl & John Rygiel
20 Jody A., Steve H., Jo M.	20 Steve Hanson & Mark Moss
21 Becky McNeil	21 Mary McKenna & Cherie Holder
24 Jo M., Becky & Mike Mc.	24 John Rygiel
28 Erin Ogletree	28 Jo & Mark Moss

Worship Assistants

Communion Prep/Clean

7 Jo Moss	7 Mike & Becky McNeil
14 Julie Wersal	14 T. M. Garner & Terri Watson
20 Jo Moss	20 N/A
21 Mike McNeil	21 Julie Morris & Jeff Morris
24 Becky McNeil	24 N/A
28 Julie Wersal	28 Lisa & John Rygiel

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
30	1	2	3	4	5	6
			6 pm Advent Soup Supper			
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
10 am Advent Worship 11:30 am First Sunday Potluck	5:30 pm AA Toys for Tots Deadline		6 pm Advent Soup Supper		5:30 pm Yoga	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
10 am Advent Worship 11:30 am Fellowship & Church Council	Noon PTO 5:30 pm AA FNB Gift Deadline		6 pm Advent Soup Supper		5:30 pm Yoga	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
10 am Advent Worship 11:30 am Fellowship 5:30 pm Blue Christmas	5:30 pm AA	Newsletter Deadline	6 pm Advent Soup Supper 7 pm Christ- mas Eve Worship		7:30 am 5-Loaves Prep	9:30 am 5-Loaves Deliveries
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
10 am Worship 11:30 am Fellowship	5:30 pm AA					

Christmas & Advent Happenings

From soup suppers to sanctuary preparation, as well as special opportunities to worship, to prepare, and to share. Zion's welcomes everyone to this season of anticipation and joy.

Advent Soup Suppers

Soup suppers are an event during the Advent season that allows us to gather to share a simple meal of soup and fellowship, followed by a brief Advent study. These gatherings are a way for us to prepare for Christmas through shared food, prayer, and reflection. All are welcome.

Our soup suppers are at 6 p.m. each Wednesday in Advent (Dec. 3, 10, 17 & 24), and feature soup (including a vegetarian option), bread, and dessert. If you can help provide food, please sign up using the sheet on the table by the chalkboard. Remember too, that the Christmas soup supper will be followed by our traditional Christmas Eve worship at 7 p.m.

Advent Preparations

The First Sunday of Advent, Nov. 30, we began preparing the sanctuary for Christmas. Volunteers helped set up the Sanctuary Christmas tree and took part in the hanging of the greens. Following worship on the Second Sunday of Advent, Dec. 7, we will hang the Chrismon ornaments (see page 9 to learn more about the Chrismons and their beginnings in a Lutheran Church in Virginia). Sanctuary preparations will continue each Sunday in Advent as we prepare to celebrate the Joy of the Savior born to us this Christmas Season.



John Rygiel & Mark Moss prepare sanctuary Christmas tree.

Blue Christmas

The public tone of the Christmas season does not resonate with many people. But, that does not mean they are alone or that they don't observe the season in their own way. Each year, Zion's offers a safe worship space for people to honor losses and respect concerns. The Blue Christmas worship service begins at 5:30 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 21, in the sanctuary. Reasons to attend are many, as we remember that God is good. God is strong. God is walking with us now.



Jeff Wahl

The service is designed to create a sacred and holy setting for comfort. It offers a quiet and contemplative worship experience that honors those who are walking through grief and struggling with loss. This year's worship will feature Jeff Wahl, cousin of Zion's member Tracy Wahl. Jeff, a talented solo guitarist, is more than a musician -- he's a guide. Between songs, he shares the personal experiences, reflections, and inspirations behind the music, offering the congregation a rare blend of virtuosity and vulnerability.

The congregation invites all who desire to honor their losses and in a safe and sacred space to join us for this meaningful service of worship. As with all worship services and events at Zion's Lutheran, all are welcome.

Christmas Eve

On Christmas Eve the world welcomes the light of the Christ child. Zion's Christmas Eve candlelight worship will be at 7 p.m. in the sanctuary. We will have our Advent Soup Supper at 6 p.m. that day, so join us for both. All are welcome.

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What's Happening in Zion's Lutheran Family?



Happy Birthday Wishes:

December 28: **John Rygiel**

- ✦ We are grateful to **Pastors John & Charlotte Strecker-Baseler** (photo at left) for leading worship on Nov. 16 so that **Pr. Lisa** could accompany her father to his brother's funeral.
- ✦ Zion's is updating the worship assistance lists for 2026. If you are not on the list and are willing to be part of this important support of our worship services, let **Jo Moss** know. We are looking for ushers, lectors, communion preparation/clean, and worship assistants. We also are looking for people who are willing to step in and help out when we need a substitute.
- ✦ Thank you to everyone who helped get the sanctuary ready for Advent, following worship on Nov. 30. **Brittany Cook & Cristy Street** oversaw hanging the greens, and **John Rygiel & Mark Moss** for setting up the sanctuary Christmas tree.
- ✦ **The Trinidad Music Association** will present its Winter Concert at 7 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 6, and 2 p.m. on Sunday, Dec. 7, at First United Methodist Church. This year's concert includes Zion's members: **DeWayne Harris, Cheryl Leef, Becky McNeil, Mark Nelson, Connie Pallone, Sharon Sorenson, John & Charlotte Strecker-Baseler, and Tracy Wahl** as part of the Trinidad Community Chorale. The Trinidad Children's Choir and Trinidad Handbell Choir also will perform.
- ✦ At a special congregational meeting Sunday, Nov. 2, Zion's members authorized the Church Council to withdraw funds from Zion's Lutheran's trust fund to cover expenses for the remainder of 2025. The funds also will help cover capital improvements such as handrails, electrical upgrades, and mitigation measures that Church Mutual requires be done or have underway by mid December.

Save the Dates

Dec. 3, 10, 17 & 24 — Advent Soup Suppers — 6 p.m.

Dec. 21 — Blue Christmas Worship — 5:30 p.m.

Dec. 24 — Christmas Eve Worship — 7 p.m.



It's Time to Update the Zion's Church Directory

Julie Wersal is working on the Zion's 2026 Church Directory. This church directory includes contact information for anyone who considers themselves part of the Zion's Lutheran family. You do not need to be a voting member of Zion's to be included in the directory.

Julie has placed a copy of the 2025 directory in a pink binder in the Fellowship Hall. Please take time to look at that directory and make any changes or updates to your information. If you would like to be added to the directory, there are pages in the back of the binder to add your information. Also, if you would like a new photo, please indicate that on the review directory, or let Julie know.

Christmas & Advent Happenings

(Continued from page 4)

Opportunities to Give

Toys for Tots: There still is time to support the Las Animas County Toys for Tots program. Terri Watson is the Marine Corp local representative for the Toys for Tots. She reminds us that the deadline to give is Dec. 8. Please consider this need when selecting toys to donate. The deadline to donate is Monday, Dec. 8. Please place unwrapped toys in the collection box in the Fellowship Hall. Monetary donations also are welcome. To donate, or if you have questions, talk to Terri Watson



Santa Gift Tree: For the past 19 years, First National Bank, Trinidad, has sponsored the Santa Gift Tree to benefit area senior citizens. The bank works in conjunction with South Central Council of Governments, Corazon Square, Las Animas County Department of Social Services, Trinidad Rehabilitation and Healthcare Center, The Legacy at Trinidad, and local groups to fulfill these Christmas wishes. Through the program, area seniors were invited to write a "letter to Santa" sharing their holiday wish list. Requests may include help with a utility bill, food, gift cards or personal items with a price range of about \$25 or more.

Zion's again is partnering with the bank to support this project, especially as First National expects more than 430 requests this Christmas. Our congregation will be asked to take one or two *Santa Letters*. Accompanying each letter are detailed instructions on the process. Wrapped gifts should be returned to the First National Bank main lobby no later than Monday, Dec. 15. Please consider supporting this project. To get a letter, contact Jo Moss.

Zion's Annual Coat Drive: If you still have coats, blankets, socks, scarfs, and other items of warmth that could benefit the unhoused. Please contact Pr. Lisa so she can get them to Pr. Clay and the Way ministry for the unhoused. We are grateful to everyone who donated for the coat drive in November, but if you missed the opportunity to give, feel free to do so now.

ELCA Good Gifts: Many of us have seen the ELCA *Good Gifts* catalog, either in the Fellowship Hall or in your mailbox. As members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), we believe God is calling us into the world. And with generous, loving hands, we can make a difference. ELCA Good Gifts is an opportunity to provide critical support to the ministries and programs that mean the most to us and the people we love. It also is an opportunity to enhance our global stewardship.

The projects outlined in the catalog and online are designed to serve the communities for which they are dedicated. ELCA Good Gifts recognizes that the congregations, companion churches and partners served know their communities best. That is why they identify the needs and priorities in their communities and work for solutions they believe will have the greatest impact.

The items in the *Good Gifts* catalog are examples from projects supported through different church-wide ministries. The projects have been planned by community partners, meaning that each community receives exactly the kind of support it needs and none of what it doesn't.

Good Gift donations are used where they are needed most within the wider category of each gift selected. (For example, a gift of vaccinations may be used to support other health care initiatives.) This allows the ELCA to stay adaptive, flexible, and effective in the work they do.

To give a gift that resonates most to you, or to choose gifts to give in honor of friends and loved ones, use the Order forms (or consider other ways to give -both online and via mail) at the Good Gifts website: <https://goodgifts.elca.org/page/76903/action/1>.

Thanksgiving Blessings Abound When All are Welcome and Volunteers are Plentiful

Zion's 32nd Annual Community Thanksgiving Dinner was a true community event with volunteers not only from Zion's but also from organizations, and other congregations, as well as individuals from the community. The work included preparation and cooking, set up and clean up, deliveries and "to go" meals, and a sit-down food service. The menu was a traditional Thanksgiving dinner with turkey, ham, potatoes, yams, green beans, gravy, dinner rolls, cranberries or fruit, and dessert.

However, the message was not about menus or numbers served, but rather about the spirit of community, of inclusion, and of giving at a time when the need is great. It was a message conveyed through action that indeed Zion's is a safe and welcoming place.

Norine Hazen, who again stepped up to coordinate the meal, says that the list of volunteers, which was more than 100, is too long to cite individually, especially because there were many behind-the-scenes workers. For example, we had 18 teams that helped ensure food was delivered to 203 locations throughout Trinidad as well as Aguilar, Segundo, Hoehne, and Cokedale. We also saw the largest number of people who dined in with more than 200 people embracing our message that all are welcome.

Area businesses supported the dinner with contributions of time, funds, and in-kind donations.

Zion's also received an El Pomar Grant for \$5,000 to support the feeding ministry. Once again, Safeway donated more than \$5,000 collected through its Community Giving Program.

First United Methodist Church members prepared all of the stuffing, and Zion's members worked long and hard to coordinate and support the entire event.

Norine did offer a shout out of to super cooks — Coralie Lashbrook, who prepared 11 turkeys, and to Becky McNeil, who prepared five. She noted that Zion's was able to make a difference for so many people again this Thanksgiving season and for that we all are thankful.



Top: Kathy Broman readies rolls. Mike McMillan & Lynell Mazza prepare gravy. And, dinner is served!

Acknowledgements: Contributors — John & Charlotte Strecker-Baseler, Lisa Rygiel, Julie Wersal, Mary McKenna, Tracy Wahl, Terri Watson, Sharon Sorenson, Norine Hazen, Erica Gonzalez, Living Lutheran, ELCA Virginia Synod.

Photos/Images — Tracy Wahl, Robert Hoenike, Jo Moss.

Editors — Jo Moss, Erin Ogletree, Mark Moss.

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Sharing Our Recipes: Buffalo Chicken Dip

By Pr. Lisa Rygiel

This tangy, creamy dip tastes like Buffalo chicken wings! It's perfect for parties and potlucks and is best served hot with crackers and celery sticks.

Buffalo Chicken Dip

Yield: 5 Cups (20 servings)

Ingredients

- 2 (10 ounce) cans chunk chicken, drained
- 3/4 Cup hot pepper sauce (such as *Frank's RedHot*)
- 2 (8 ounce) packages of cream cheese (softened)
- 1 Cup ranch dressing
- 1 1/2 Cups shredded cheddar cheese



Directions

1. Gather all ingredients
2. Heat chicken and hot pepper sauce in a skillet over medium heat until heated through, 3-5 minutes. Stir in cream cheese and ranch dressing. Cook and stir until well blended and warm, 3-5 minutes.
3. Mix in 1/2 of the cheddar cheese, and transfer the mixture to a slow cooker. Sprinkle the remaining cheese over the top.
4. Cover and cook on low until dip is hot and bubbly, about 35 minutes.
5. Serve with celery sticks, crackers, etc.

Zion's 5th Sunday Offering Benefits the Unhoused

When there are five Sundays in a month (like this November), Zion's traditionally collects a special offering for various causes and ministries. The collections reflect part of the Zion's "glocal" giving.

Through the years, Zion's has shared 5th Sunday offerings with such local organizations as ACTS, The Way, and the Soup Kitchen. In addition, global outreach has included disaster relief, RIC, health care programs, and missions.

In November, our 5th Sunday Offering was collected for Trinidad's Coalition for the Unhoused, offering them support at a time when the need is great, especially as the coalition works to identify volunteers and suitable locations for warming shelters.

Erica Gonzalez, Systems Coordinator for the Coalition for the Unhoused, is scheduling online and in-person training for volunteers who would like to help with shelter operations, especially for emergencies, such as warming shelters.

We will work with Erica to identify and share training opportunities for volunteers who can help this important program in Trinidad.

Chrismon Ornaments have Lutheran Roots

By Jo Moss

Chrismon ornaments are a tradition in many churches, decorating sanctuary Christmas trees with symbols of Jesus Christ.

What many people may not realize is that the tradition of Chrismons originated with a Lutheran church in the ELCA's Virginia Synod. Frances Kipps Spencer, who is a member of Ascension Lutheran Church in Danville, Virginia, created the first Chrismons in 1957 for her congregation. Mrs. Spencer is said to have felt that garish ornaments had no place in church and that a tree should tell the story of Jesus' birth and life.

An article in the Virginia Synod's E-News explained that Mrs. Spencer's original Chrismon designs were monograms of and symbols for Jesus. The Ascension congregation still uses her designs as well as the original Chrismons.

From those early beginnings, Mrs. Spencer's tradition has spread. She even wrote five books on Chrismons, including patterns for making them. Because of her Chrismon ministry, countless churches around the world have joined in creating their own ornaments using old and new patterns alike.

The global impact of these Chrismons has returned to Ascension Danville time and time again. The congregation now has a collection of about 2,000 ornaments, each one honoring the story of Jesus Christ with many unique interpretations. Even the Smithsonian Institute recognized Ascension and the Chrismons, with a display of ornaments, each one a replica of the church's originals and provided by the congregation to the museum.

When a "big-box store" began selling Chrismon patterns as their own, Ascension was forced to defend its trademark. A long-time member told Living Lutheran, that "We didn't want anyone to make a profit off of Chrismons. It's religious and should be given freely."

Anyone can make Chrismons on their own using any material they would like. Styrofoam, wire, colored beads, wood, and paper are just some of the many supplies often used to make Chrismons. The main guideline for Chrismon crafting is to only use gold and white materials so the ornament can share Christ's story.

The colors white and gold symbolizes the purity and majesty of the Son of God and the Son of Man. Some ornaments feature small amounts of color other than white or gold, but this is for specific purposes deemed significant enough in telling Christ's story. For example, red is used to remind us of Christ's shedding blood for us on the cross.

Zion's set up its sanctuary Christmas tree and hung greenery on the first Sunday of Advent, Nov. 30. We will hang our Chrismon ornaments on the second Sunday of Advent on Dec. 7.



In 2024, Sharon Sorenson, Cristy Street & Carol Hanson place Chrismon Ornaments on Zion's sanctuary Christmas tree.

Council Updates: November 2025

Zion's Lutheran Church Council
11:30 a.m. Nov. 9, 2025

Members present

The regular meeting of the Zion's Lutheran Church council was brought to order at 11:51 a.m. by Mike McNeil. All members were present.

Pr. Lisa Rygiel offered the invocation.

Reports:

Secretary — The October minutes were reviewed and approved. The minutes from the Nov. 2 congregational meeting were amended to reflect that 24 voting members were present. The minutes were approved as amended.

Treasurer — The budget report was amended to reflect the transfer of trust funds to the general fund as approved by the congregation on Nov. 2. The report also reflected Safeway gift card activation to help cover Thanksgiving Dinner costs.

Financial Secretary — Council discussed income from Fellowship Hall use fees. Offering in October was \$7,200.

Trust Fund — Trust fund report was approved unanimously.

Food Ministry — Thanksgiving logistics, including tracking donations and sending thank you notes were discussed.

Pastor — New member discussions were reviewed. Pr. Lisa discussed her absence to attend a funeral, noting that Pastor John & Charlotte Strecker-Baseler would officiate in her absence.

Worship and Music have met to plan music through December. Ten new *All Creation Sings* hymnals will be located in the balcony once the name plates have been added. Both pianos have been tuned and serviced. Christmas and Advent Season plans were reviewed. As were plans for Bible study after the holidays.

Old Business

Church Mutual lists of improvements were reviewed. The handrails for the two basement access areas were approved, Mark Moss will follow up on the bid for electrical work from Redwing. Zion's Lutheran Emergency Planning process also was reviewed. The deadline for response to Church Mutual is Dec. 13.

New business

The budget committee volunteers are as follows: Mike McNeil, Julie Wersal, and Kathy Broman and Pastor Lisa Rygiel.

The 2026 Annual Meeting will be Feb. 1.

The council reviewed terms of newest members. Mary McKenna's term is two years. Terri Watson's term is three years. Terms ending: Kathy Broman, Norine Hazen, and Cherie Holder.

Capital improvements discussed as needs are many, including flooring. Lists are needed to prioritize.

Council discussed the Christmas Eve worship. Two times were offered, 7 pm and midnight. The vote was 8 for 7pm and 1 for midnight.

Discussion regarding stewardship was tabled until next meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 115 p.m. The next meeting will be at 11:30 a.m. on Dec.14.

Respectfully Submitted,
 Mary McKenna, council secretary

Note: The council also met briefly in special session after worship on Nov. 23 to review and approve upgraded electrical service to the sanctuary as outlined by Church Mutual. Redwing offered a bid of \$3,900 for the project, which the council authorized.