



Grace Notes

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Venezuela

There is concern across this church about the Jan. 3, 2026, U.S. military action in Venezuela and what has or will follow. I believe that this Sunday's celebration of Jesus' baptism, and our own, can provide understanding, guide our prayers and promote faithful action at this time. The baptism of our Lord reminds us that Jesus is God's own beloved child, who has come to fulfill an age-old promise to bring justice and peace to the nations (Isaiah 42:1).

As God's beloved, Christians share in Jesus' ministry and compassion for the vulnerable. Our prayers remain with the people of Venezuela. We pray for their safety and well-being, for their livelihoods, and for reliable access to food, health care and clean water. Our church walks in solidarity with them through the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Venezuela — their people, pastors, deacons and ministries. Support is also expressed in the broader Christian community, both in Venezuela and among the Venezuelan diaspora, who have long called for and worked toward peace, democracy and human rights.

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Statement on Venezuela

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As baptized children of God, Lutherans are set free to seek the well-being of our neighbors. Over 600,000 Venezuelans in the United States face uncertainty without renewal of Temporary Protected Status (TPS), and deportations of Venezuelan migrants continue despite these anxious times in their homeland. As Venezuela navigates a tenuous situation, our nation has a responsibility for a mindful humanitarian response.

We continue our call for humanitarian support for migrant-serving organizations in neighboring countries and pathways to asylum in the United States for Venezuelans and all with credible fears of persecution.

As followers of Jesus, we seek justice for the nations. As a church in this country, we call for what transpires next to center the Venezuelan people and their right to self-determination. We, as a country, must resist any temptation to use this occasion to foster special or corporate economic interests. As Venezuela faces continued instability, more people are likely to face displacement.

Let us avoid further polarization as we respond to what is unfolding. Lutheran theology affirms that two things at once can be true. The removal of Nicolás Maduro, a corrupt authoritarian, and the end of his brutal repression are causes for celebration for many. At the same time, U.S. action in Venezuela without the constitutionally mandated authorization of the U.S. Congress violated international law and created a dangerous precedent that weakens global peace and security. Our social teaching tells us that any conflict must meet strict moral criteria rooted in the principles of “right intention, justifiable cause, legitimate authority ...” (For Peace in God’s World, page 11).

In this highly complex and dangerous moment, Christians remember that Jesus is God’s beloved child. Through our baptisms, this identity and mission forms us and calls us to civic action. We are called to speak the truth in love but with clarity about accountability for any abuse of power. In this time, we can advocate boldly for a peaceful way forward and urge the U.S. Congress to exert its authority over war powers and ensure due process is followed. This action is especially critical when risking U.S. troops’ lives and the lives of civilians around the world.

As we remember the meaning of baptism for action in the world, let us be fervent in prayer for our siblings in Christ in Venezuela. Let us also support and accompany Venezuelans and their families worldwide. Born in Venezuela, Bishop Pedro Suárez of the ELCA Florida-Bahamas Synod wrote the following prayer:

By your Holy Spirit, kindle hope that does not disappoint and peace that surpasses all understanding. We entrust Venezuela, its people and your church into your loving hands, trusting not in our own strength but in your steadfast love made known in Jesus Christ, who is our peace. Amen.

In Christ,

The Rev. Yehiel Curry

Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

January 11 to January 18

Sun Jan 11	9:30am Worship Service <u>Zoom ID: 841 6597 2335</u> <u>Passcode: 12012</u> 10:40am Faith Formation 5:00pm Confirmation
Mon Jan 12	6:00pm Property Meeting 7:00pm Knit One, Pray Too 7:00pm NA 12 Step Meeting Fellowship Hall
Tues Jan 13	Noon AA 12 Steps Meeting Room 211 5:30pm Stewardship Meeting Conference Room 6:30pm Outreach Meeting Hearth Room 6:30pm Hands of AA 12-Step Meeting Upper Room
Wed Jan 14	12:00pm Brown Bag Bible Study 1:00pm Prayer Warriors 6:00pm Voices of Zion Choir Rehearsal 7:00pm Festival Bells Handbell Rehearsal
Thurs Jan 15	5:30pm Public Theology Ferch's Craffthouse 6:30pm Troop 27 Meeting Room 100
Friday Jan 16	12:00pm Mayfair AA Group 6:00pm ACA 12 Step Group Room 100
Sat Jan 17	1:00pm MZY Visit Black Holocaust Museum
Sun Jan 18	9:30am Worship Service 10:30am Faith Formation 5:00pm MZY Night
Next Week	Friday: Young Adult Night Saturday: Movie Marathon

Day of Racial Healing

“Just Us Narratives:

A Night of Centering Multiracial Voices Across the ELCA”

Online Tuesday, Jan. 20, 6-8 p.m. Central

[ELCA.org](https://www.elca.org)



Our Worship Volunteers

Wednesday, December 24 4:00pm

Altar Care: Gloria Caruana

Assisting Minister: Lora Marheine

Lector: Jenny Hawes

Communion, bread: Jenny H.

Communion, wine: Gabby Goll, Refilwe Magasa-Bockhorst, Lora M.

Ushers: Dave Nelson and Suzy Morgan

Acolyte:

Audio/Visual: Brenda and Mike Marciniak

Access the Prayer List

<https://bit.ly/44C1w2B>

The printed prayer list is updated
every two weeks.



Submit prayer requests

Email: pastor@mtzionlutheran.org

Call: 414-258-0456

Write: on the prayer cards at the
prayer share wall in the
north narthex.

RIC Sunday

Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Sunday is an annual worship celebration created to share in the commitment our organization and partnering faith communities have in the ongoing work of welcome, inclusion, celebration, and advocacy for LGBTQIA+ people in the life of the church. While historically this day is celebrated on the final Sunday in January, many RIC partners will celebrate on their date of affirmation, or on other days meaningful to their communities rooted in this commitment to radical hospitality. We hope you enjoy Resilient Community as we join collectively with our 1,140+ partners across the United States and Canada through this celebratory service.

"Celebrating Diversity as God's Children"

Why celebrate?

- ♥ We believe that the Gospel is built upon a foundation of diversity.
- ♥ We believe that the Creator gifted us a universe infused with beautiful diversity.
- ♥ We believe the Blessed Community is strongest and most faithful to Jesus when we invite everyone to the table.

Throughout his ministry among the peoples of Roman Palestine and in his teaching, Jesus was always reaching for those on the margins of society and religious institutions, pulling them back into the center of the life of the community. Because it is rooted in the teachings and ministry of Jesus, the work of full inclusion is something that God's beloved children can celebrate. No hiding in the shadows for us! Let us dance in the light of God's love, singing songs of liberation, justice, and inclusion.

Join the celebration on January 25!



Conditions of Confinement

The following Advocacy request comes from WISDOM, a partner in ministry with Mt Zion through MICAH.

We invite you to contact one or more of the members of the Wisconsin Assembly Corrections Committee <https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/2025/committees/assembly/2915> in support of the following two bills:

Assembly Bill 741

This bill ensures that individuals who are incarcerated in state and county facilities have access to basic personal hygiene with dignity. AB 741 would require facilities to provide a range of regular and culturally sensitive hygiene products and establish a \$25 monthly stipend for incarcerated individuals to purchase additional items as needed. This includes products appropriate for diverse hair types and skin needs.

Basic Personal Hygiene

Toiletries

Hair Care

Skin Care

\$25 Stipend

to purchase personal hygiene products from commissary

Assembly Bill 736

This bill guarantees access to free, non-toxic menstrual products in state and county correctional facilities. It requires commissaries to provide multiple options for tampons, pads, and menstrual cups at no cost, ensuring products are safe and free from harmful chemicals.

Menstrual Products

To be provided free of charge

Pads

Menstrual Cups

Tampons

We believe all people, even those who are incarcerated, should have access to basic hygiene care products.

Thank you for supporting access to these basics of human care and dignity.

Thoughts on Epiphany

Epiphany is the Church's way of saying, "Look again." Not because we missed Christmas—but because Christmas keeps unfolding.

Epiphany reminds us that the light is here.

A new day is dawning.

A new year is beginning.

And we are moving forward.

We see this light made visible through our Ministry Partners—in people being fed, clothed, and met with dignity and care. Often, the clearest sign of hope isn't dramatic. It's steady: a door opened again, a name remembered, a hand offered without judgment.

At Christmas, we celebrated that God did not love the world from a distance. God came to walk alongside us—bringing hope not just at the end of the tunnel, but within it.

You, our supporters, walk alongside this work with generosity and faith. You are not donors at a distance—you are partners in hope.

Epiphany reminds us: the light is here.

And together, we will keep walking toward it.

The Outreach for Hope Staff

Amazing Faiths Dinner



AMAZING FAITHS DINNER DIALOGUE

6PM WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28

GREENDALE COMMUNITY CHURCH

6015 CLOVER LANE, GREENDALE

Use the QR Code or website to learn more this dialogue. Participants learn about the beliefs & traditions of others within an atmosphere of respect and understanding, & are empowered to stand as witnesses for tolerance and inclusion.



Goodbye Decorations



Triangle Dinners



YOU'RE INVITED!

Triangle Dinner

Who:

You'll be assigned
a small group to
plan a meal with.

When:

A date & time
coordinated with
your group.

Groups change every few months, so
you get to meet new people within the
MTZ Congregation!

Contact Anna Kissel
(kisselannam@gmail.com) if you're
interested.

Steve's Science Tidbits

A New Wrinkle to "You Are What You Eat"

There is good reason for the adage, "You are what you eat." A massive trove of research data supports the notion that your diet plays a major role in human physiology. In the last couple decades, much of the data relates to the population of bacteria in our gut called the microbiome. Your gut houses trillions of bacteria that are crucial for our overall health, affecting a wide variety of critical processes that include digestion, vitamin formation, immunity regulation, countless metabolic pathways, mental well-being (the gut-brain axis) and disease risk. Indeed, research shows a microbiome imbalance can impact the development of a variety of health issues.

We are constantly barraged with reports of this food or that food and how they affect our health. It's an important consideration, because everything we put in our mouth affects the microbiome. Three recent research studies shed new light on this important issue and challenge some common assumptions:

(1) Analysis of 21,000 individuals across 3 countries yielded some surprising data. Omnivores (meat and plant eaters) who ate diverse, high fiber plant foods had gut bacteria profiles comparable to vegans and vegetarians, indicating that diet type appears to matter less than food quality. The head researcher stated that, "The greater the variety of plant-based foods we consume, the greater the diversity of beneficial microbes in our gut. This is because different plant-based foods contain different types of fiber, and each fiber can stimulate the growth of different types of health-promoting microbes." This appears to be true whether or not you eat meat.

(2) Dairy products such as milk and cheese are rich in nutrients and can help promote bone health. They can also affect gut health. However, not all products necessarily provide the same benefits. The second study investigated the gut microbiome response to consuming dairy products. Researchers analyzed colon biopsies from 34 patients and found milk drinkers had higher levels of bacteria linked to higher gut barrier integrity (helps keep out pathogens) and lower inflammation. However, cheese eaters showed the opposite, with reduced bacterial diversity, including lower levels of beneficial bacteria..

(3) The third study shows why fiber is important for cancer prevention. When fiber is digested, the gut produces short-chain fatty acids, notably propionate and butyrate. Experiments on isolated human and mouse colon cells show that these compounds turn on tumor-suppressing genes and shut down tumor-promoting genes (proto-oncogenes). They also activate tumor cell death (apoptosis). This could help explain why high fiber diets are associated with lower colorectal cancer rates.

As an aside, I abhor taking antibiotics. Sometimes they are absolutely necessary, but while they can destroy bad bacteria, there is significant collateral damage. They also wreak havoc on microbiome homeostasis that can take many months to repair. I always find it beneficial to have a healthy discussion with my doctor about alternate courses of action.

Steve Downs

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

Cody D. 1/3	Bryce R. 1/13	Ben S. 1/21
Aaron P. 1/4	Isaac R. 1/13	Emma W. 1/21
Val K. 1/5	Madeline E. 1/14	John M. 1/22
John P. 1/5	Angela R. 1/16	Kelsey L. 1/23
Kristin F. 1/7	Curt P. 1/17	Lauryl P. 1/24
Mascon S. 1/8	Jim G. 1/18	Caleb S. 1/25
Roy D. 1/9	Morgan R. 1/18	Tom M. 1/31
	Abby S. 1/19	

Wedding Anniversaries

Mary and Douglas J. 1/8
Ian and Lynn K. 1/10

Did you Spot the Penguins?



Where were the Penguins?

Front Page: Behind the large tree near the top and underneath the contact info at the bottom of the page

Page 3: on Pastor Tyler's shoulder!

Page 4: Inside the red ornament at the 4:00pm volunteers

Page 6: On the lawn of the new Courage House Home

Page 8: Between the photos in the Christmas Has a Heart article

Page 10: Standing next to Janet in the top right caroler photo

Page 13: Under the ladder next to Anna in the Deck the Halls photos. In the corner of the article thanking Breaking the Chains.

Back page: Right side of the Mission Statement



We hope this brought a bit of fun to your newsletter experience. For all who read this newsletter every week, thank you from the bottom of our journalistic heart.



At Mt Zion we are
Joyfully growing disciples in Christ
so that
Everyone we meet comes to know themselves as a reflection of
God's image, worthy of life and love
by prioritizing
Faith Community
Hospitality Justice

Mt Zion Staff

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Dave Nelson

Linda Havlicek
Bob Young



**Church Office
Hours**

Monday — Friday 10:00am — 3:00pm

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