

Zion Lutheran Church
439 3rd Avenue South
Clinton, Iowa 52732
Phone 563-242-7391

Vol. 95 No. 12

THE

COURIER

December 2025

Greetings dear Siblings in Christ!

Happy New Church Year! We have gone around the liturgical year once again and begun another. Last year we read through the gospel of Luke. This year we return to the gospel of Matthew, interspersed with other readings of course. And once again, together, we will remind each other of the life that Jesus led and the words that he left for us to embrace.

But this is probably not what is on our minds. By the time you read this, we have already stuffed ourselves with turkey and sweet potatoes followed by some pecan pie, or whatever feast your tradition prefers and moved on to our shopping lists and decorations. It is meant to be a time of joy, and I pray it is for you.

There is no doubt, however, that for some of us it is a heavy time of year. Whether it is sorrow, bereavement, fear or simply being overwhelmed, the joy of the year is quickly stolen. And it is perhaps for those of us so struggling, that Jesus is born.

While history would tell us that Jesus was probably not born in a cave or a stable, he was born in poverty, in a home not his own, to weary parents who had traveled a long way. He was laid in a manger, a feeding trough. The world around him was under siege by a cruel and powerful government. And still, his very birth made angels sing and shepherds worship and magi bow.

There is no better place for us to look for hope, peace, joy and love than in the town of Bethlehem on Christmas. The place where God enters our world with all its brokenness.

So, the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. John 1: 14 (New Living Translation)

I do not take your heavy hearts lightly. I am always available to listen to you and pray with you. God's heart weeps with yours. Still, I would like to leave you with a poem by Ann Weems. May you find the joy of one small baby in a manger this Christmas and may you find the courage to follow him throughout the year ahead.

Not celebrate?

Your burden is too great to bear?

Your loneliness is intensified during this Christmas season?

Your tears have no end?

Not celebrate?

You should lead the celebration!

You should run through the streets

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to ring the bells and sing the loudest!
You should fling the tinsel on the tree,
and open your house to your neighbors and call them in to dance!
For it is you above all others who know the joy of Advent.
It is unto you that a Savior is born this day,
One who comes to lift your burden from your shoulders,
One who comes to wipe the tears from your eyes.
You are not alone,
for He is born this day to you.
-Ann Weems

A blessed holiday season to you and your family and friends. Merry Christmas.
Pastor Barb and Bruce

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

Worship services are:
Saturdays 5:30 pm
Sundays 9:00 am
Christmas Eve Worship:
Wednesday, Dec. 24th 4:00 pm
Wednesday, Dec. 24th 7:00 pm

Video services are offered via Facebook (www.facebook.com/zionlutheranchurchclinton)
and posted on Zion's website (www.zionlutheranclinton.org) on Monday.

Our Sunday morning radio broadcast is on KROS, 105.9 FM and 1340 AM, Sunday mornings at 10:30 am.

Monthly Birthday Fellowship

December's birthday fellowship in the Gathering Space will be held on Sunday, December 21st, after the 9:00 worship service.

Please join us in the gathering space to honor Zion's members and guests celebrating birthdays in the month of November. Refreshments and cupcakes will be served.

All are welcome!!!



Zion Child Care & Preschool

The month of November, we focused on the color of brown and shape of diamond. We had lots of fall / Thanksgiving projects.

Our 4's preschool had their first set of conferences for the school year. It's always great to be able to meet with the families and share all of their student's growth.

We were closed for November 27th & 28th for the Thanksgiving holiday. It's always nice to get some extra time with our families.

We are currently enrolling for our 2025/2026 school year for four year-old preschool. We



only have a couple of spots remaining. We participate in a Voluntary Preschool Grant with the CCSD and State of IowaAny four year-old that lives in Iowa goes to preschool for FREE! NO tuition! Please help us spread the word. Interested families can call the center at 243-9393 or stop in to fill out registration paperwork.

Kelly Bork, Director



Family Advent Celebration

On December 7 at 4:00p.m., members of Zion are invited to an Advent Celebration here at Zion. We will start in the sanctuary with a short concert by the Clintones. After the Clintones are done singing we will have a congregational sing along of Christmas carols.

A pot luck dinner will follow in the dining hall. Please join us for a fun evening of music and fellowship.

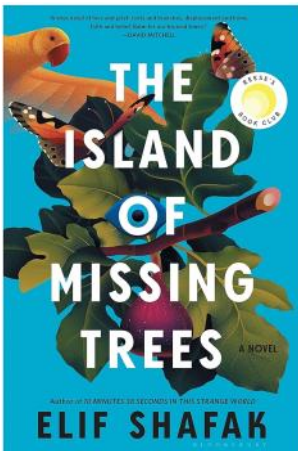
ZION'S PRAYER CHAIN

Did you know Zion has a prayer chain with people who are ready to pray for you? If you, or someone you know, is in need of prayer, please notify the prayer chain by calling Helen Steen at 563-243-2288 or Mary Lou Mallicoat at 563-357-2963. All information is kept confidential; only first names are used on the prayer chain. Please ask permission if requesting prayers for someone other than yourself from either the person or a family member of the person.

If you are interested in becoming a member of the prayer chain, please contact Helen Steen at 563-243-2288 or Mary Lou Mallicoat at 563-357-2963.



ZION BOOK CLUB



*Zion Book Club meets in our church library the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Our next being Wednesday, December 17th @ 10:00 right after Prayer/Bible Study. Our next book is **The Island of the Missing Trees** by Elif Shafak.*

The novel follows Kostas, a Greek Cypriot and Defne, a Turkish Cypriot whose secret teenage love is torn apart by the violence and division of 1970s Cyprus. Decades later they grapple with loss and trauma. The daughter learns of a hidden past.

The novel introduces you to a less-well-known history of Cyprus through a personal lens.

Books are on the cart, feel free to join us!! The 3rd Wednesday of each month.

Faith FUNdations

As we think about the last month and all that we are thankful for, we want to make sure to thank all the wonderful volunteers that make Faith FUNdations such a success! Without them we would not be able to run this great program. We are also so blessed with our amazing parents, who help their children grow in their faith by bringing them to Zion each week. And of course, the children are our biggest blessing and greatest joy as we watch them learn about Jesus and build lasting friendships with other children and adults. We are so blessed at Zion and thankful for each and every one of you!

Please mark your December calendars with the following dates!

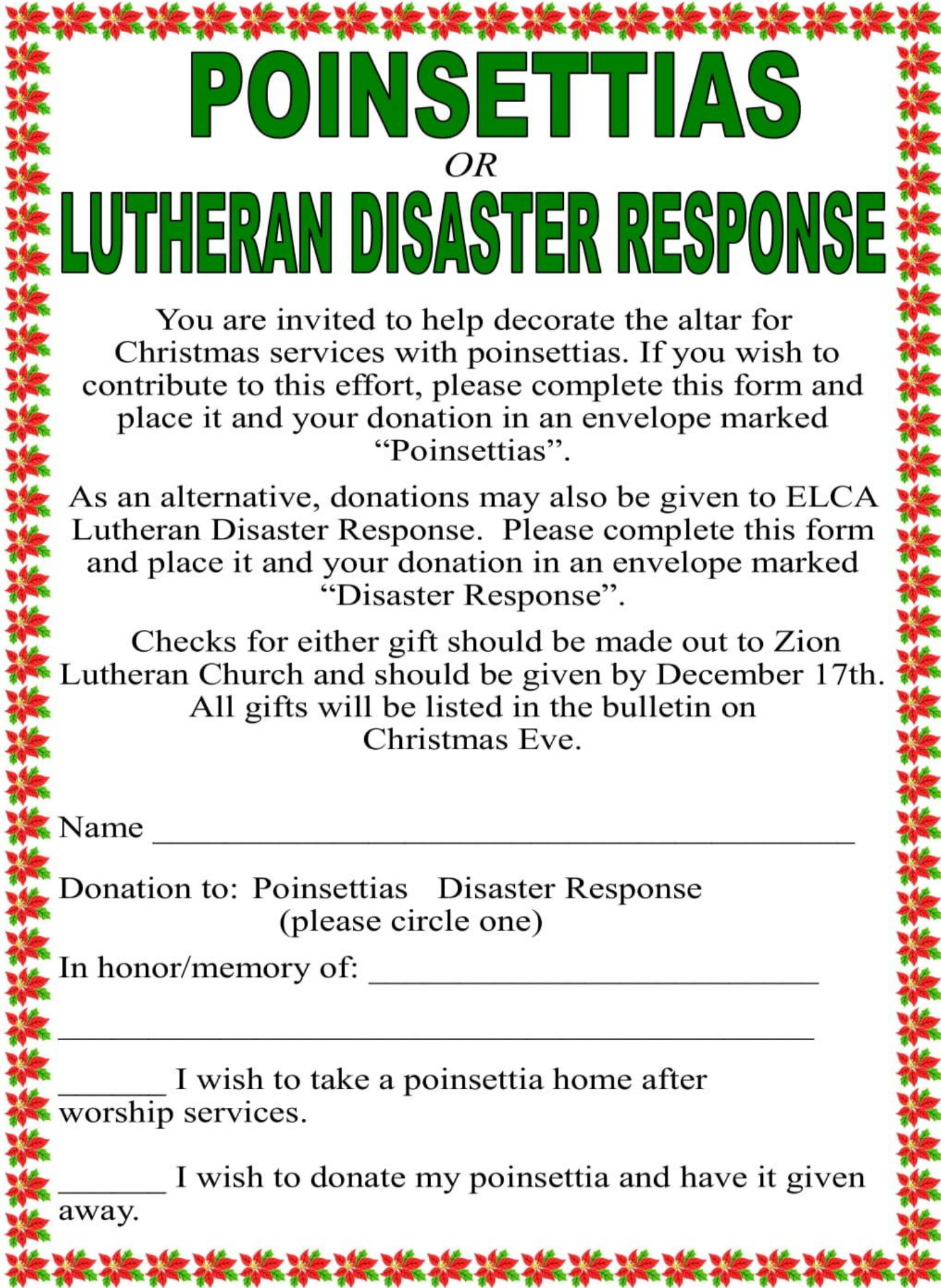
- **December 7:** Faith FUNdation children will be singing carols during the 9:00 Worship service; Confirmation students are welcome to join in.
- **December 17:** Faith FUNdation children and Confirmation students will go caroling at area care facilities. Please join us in assisting to transport your child around town. We will have supper & leave for caroling at 5:45. This is a VERY special event you do not want to miss so please join us!
- **December 24:** No Faith FUNdations or Confirmation - Merry Christmas!
- **December 31:** No Faith FUNdations or Confirmation - Happy New Year!
- **January 7, 2026:** Resume Faith FUNdations and Confirmation - Welcome Back!



Come Join the Holiday FUN!

We extend an invitation to our Zion family and friends to join Faith FUNdations in Christmas Caroling on Wednesday, December 17, at 5:45 pm. As in the past, we will leave Zion in two groups to carol to our members who reside in area nursing facilities or are in their own homes. We then return to Zion to enjoy cookies and hot cocoa.

Please consider joining us to spread Christmas love to our senior members. If you have any questions, please reach out to Barb Rhoades.



POINSETTIAS

OR

LUTHERAN DISASTER RESPONSE

You are invited to help decorate the altar for Christmas services with poinsettias. If you wish to contribute to this effort, please complete this form and place it and your donation in an envelope marked "Poinsettias".

As an alternative, donations may also be given to ELCA Lutheran Disaster Response. Please complete this form and place it and your donation in an envelope marked "Disaster Response".

Checks for either gift should be made out to Zion Lutheran Church and should be given by December 17th. All gifts will be listed in the bulletin on Christmas Eve.

Name _____

Donation to: Poinsettias Disaster Response
(please circle one)

In honor/memory of: _____

_____ I wish to take a poinsettia home after worship services.

_____ I wish to donate my poinsettia and have it given away.

JOIN US!



You're invited to our

SILENT AND VIRTUAL

Auction

**Virtual Auction
December 5-6
Zion Facebook Page**

**Silent Auction and Brunch
December 7
10:00 a.m.
Zion Lutheran Church**

**Proceeds go to Informational
Referral and Assistance**

DON'T FORGET YOUR UNDERWEAR!!!!!!



Again this year, the Social Ministry Committee is collecting donations of socks and underwear that will be distributed to area children through the Holiday Network.

You may drop off your donations of socks or underwear in the collection boxes in the Narthex or the Gathering Space. Shop for any age child, boy or girl.

*Not up to shopping this year???
Make a cash donation and we will shop for you.*

Thank you for your gifts!

PLEASE Support Our Local Food Pantry!!!

The increased need at the IRAS Food Pantry has put a considerable strain on their ability to fill food boxes. Would you please consider using the "Food Pantry" envelope in your offering envelopes to make a monetary donation AND/OR bring food items for the grocery cart in the Narthex?

Most needed food items:

Boxed Dinners	Canned Meat
Canned Fruit	Canned Vegetables
Cereal	Instant Potatoes
Mac n Cheese	Pancake Mix
Pasta	Pasta Sauce
Peanut Butter	Soup/Ramen



Annual Reports

As year end approaches, it is time for committees to think about their annual reports. The year Amanda is asking that, if your report **does not** require end of year financial information, you have it in to her by Wednesday, December 31st.

If your report does require end of year financials, please have your report turned in by Friday, January 9th.

It is important that the reports be turned in on time so that they may be compiled into the Zion's annual report and be distributed prior to the Annual Meeting.

COUNCIL NEWS

Summary of Congregation Council Minutes – October 14, 2025

(The full minutes are posted on the bulletin board near the church office.)

Pastor's Report: Pastor Barb informed the Council that Confirmation is going well.

Membership Update: Kristi Montgomery shared the Statistical Report for September. Total weekend attendance YTD is 5,478. The average weekend worship attendance YTD is 137.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer, Deb Vath, reported that giving is 10% off YTD pledges. Concerning expenses, Deb explained that the Pastor Salary expense is below budget because our Pastors have been working only part-time. She also informed the Council that another quarterly payment of approximately \$7,400 will be made to Zion Childcare on our loan for the Portico/Canopy. Linda Dutchess moved to accept the Treasurer's Report with Patti Lauritzen seconding the motion. All ayes.

Old Business:

Call Committee Report: Currently, there is no candidate to be interviewed.

"Caring for Our Community" Support: It was reported to the Council by Deb Willwerth that there has been a great response in the request for volunteers. The ministry is continuing to identify individuals that may welcome the support.

Technology Committee: Erin Montgomery has not received any inquiries about serving on this committee. Deb Vath has volunteered to work with Erin.

Nominating Committee: Kristi Montgomery has been recruiting volunteers to serve on the committee.

Stewardship Committee: Linda Dutchess shared with the Council that a response date for the pledge cards to be returned needs to be decided. November 15th and 16th was discussed by the Council as a return date. The letters and cards will be mailed.

New Business:

B & G Request - Funds for Lawn Mower / Snow Blower: Building and Grounds would like to purchase a new snow blower/lawn mower unit. The estimated cost is \$7,000. The old snow blower/lawn mower snow broom attachment was sold for \$800. The committee has \$2,000 from a 2025 Greatest Needs grant leaving approximately \$4,700 left to be funded. Deb Vath made a motion for the Council to approve the purchase of a snow blower/lawn mower with the additional funding to come from the Building Repair/Improvement Balance line in Special Funds. The funding from the Building Repair/Improvement Balance is not to exceed \$5,000. The motion was seconded by Patti Lauritzen. All ayes. There was also a discussion on the need for a new computer to run the HVAC system. Dennis Schoening has sent the specs that a new computer must meet in order to run the system successfully. More discussion with Dennis will be

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FINANCIAL CORNER

October 2025 at a glance

General Operating	October	Year To Date
Income +	\$24,357.72	\$267,489.28
Expense -	\$22,003.13	\$300,477.20
Difference =	\$2,354.59	-\$32,987.92

October In-Person Worship Attendance

Weekend	Saturday	Sunday	Total
October 4th & 5th	45	83	128
October 11th & 12th	50	94	144
October 18 & 19th	41	87	128
October 25th & 26th	40	90	130
Average	44	79	133

In the Hospital? Moved to a Care Facility?

Because of privacy laws, hospitals & care facilities are following strict guidelines for the sharing of patient/resident information. **Please be sure to call the church office or the pastor to keep us informed.**

Council News Continued

forthcoming. The Council discussed the possibility of getting a quote from TwinState on a computer that would be able to run with the HVAC system.

2026 Budget Process: Deb Vath reported to the Council that all committees have been requested to submit their anticipated expenditures for 2026, so that the expenses can be input into the 2026 budget process, by their November meeting. Once the requests have been submitted to the Finance Committee, budget meetings will be scheduled.

DECEMBER 2025

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	1 5:30 PM: Girl Scouts	2 5:00 PM: Executive Committee 5:50 PM: All-Committee Night	3 9:00 AM: Morning Prayer/ Bible Study 5:15 PM: Faith FUNDations/ Confirmation 5:45 PM: Bell Rehearsal 6:45 PM: Choir Rehearsal	4	5 5:00 PM: Virtual Auction Begins	6 5:00 PM: Virtual Auction Ends 5:30 PM: Worship
7 9:00 AM: Worship 10:00 AM: Silent Auction & Brunch 4:00 PM: Family Advent Celebration	8 10:45 AM: Sack Lunch Monday	9 5:30 PM: Boy Scouts 6:00 PM: Congregation Council	10 9:00 AM: Morning Prayer/ Bible Study 5:15 PM: Faith FUNDations/ Confirmation 5:45 PM: Bell Rehearsal 6:45 PM: Choir Rehearsal	11	12	13 9:00 AM: Childcare Christmas Program 10:00 AM: Childcare Christmas Program 11:00 AM: Childcare Christmas Program 5:30 PM: Worship
14 9:00 AM: Worship	15 5:30 PM: Girl Scouts	16 5:30 PM: Boy Scouts	17 9:00 AM: Morning Prayer/ Bible Study 10:00 AM: Zion Book Club 5:15 PM: Faith FUNDations/ Confirmation Caroling 5:45 PM: Bell Rehearsal 6:45 PM: Choir Rehearsal	18	19	20 9:00 AM: RiverChor Rehearsal 5:30 PM: Worship
21 9:00 AM: Worship 10:00 AM: Birthday Fellowship 2:00 PM: RiverChor Messiah	22	23	24 Christmas Eve OFFICE CLOSED 4:00 PM: Worship Service 7:00 PM: Worship Service	25 Christmas OFFICE CLOSED	26	27 5:30 PM: Worship
28 9:00 AM: Worship	29 10:30 AM: Courier Assembly	30	31 9:00 AM: Morning Prayer/ Bible Study			

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ZION'S STAFF

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pastorbarb@zionlutheranclinton.org

◆
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officeadministrator@zionlutheranclinton.org

◆
Donica Vonderohe, Staff Musician
music@zionlutheranclinton.org

◆
Patrick Hoffman, Custodian

OFFICE HOURS

Monday through Friday
9:00 a.m.— 3:00 p.m.