

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

Vol. 96 No. 1

THE COURIER

January 2026

HAPPY
New Year

2026

A Prayer for Fresh Starts

Lord,

Whether I leave behind a year of joy or of trials and difficulties, I pause to give thanks.

Thank you for being with me every day of every year.

Thank you for making all things new and for giving me the grace of fresh starts and new beginnings.

Remind me of your presence in the days to come, even when I feel pushed and rushed by busyness.

Be glorified in my life this year.

Amen.

—Heather C King

A Message from Pastor Barbara

When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and the princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with their flocks,
The work of Christmas begins: To find the lost,
To heal the broken, To feed the hungry,
To release the prisoner, To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among brothers, To make music in the heart.

– Howard Thurman

Often we too quickly move from the celebration of the birth of the Christ Child to the anticipation or apprehension of the new year. We pack away the lights, even though the darkness still prevails. We put away (or throw away) the Christmas cards knowing it will be another year before we reach out to each other again. And we wrap that baby Jesus in a manger in tissue paper to store away, forgetting that he moved into our neighborhood to stay.

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. (John 1:14a MSG)

What will we do with the life changing Christmas story when Christmas is over? Mary's life changed forever. Joseph's life was not the same. The Magi and the shepherds went on to tell everyone something wondrous had occurred. They too became different people from the encounter. Instead of packing it all away until next December, what if we take the incredible message of love, 'born for us this day', into the new year and allow it to change us?

"This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again." (John 3: 16-17 MSG)

This is the work of Christmas. May it make music in your heart throughout 2026!
Happy New Year!

The Peace of Christ is with you.
Pr. Barb

Zion Child Care & Preschool

We spent December preparing for our Christmas programs that were held on Saturday, December 13th. We had a 9:00 am program for AM and PM 3-year-old preschool classes. We also held a 10:00 am program for our 4-year-old AM classes and a 11:00 am program for our 4-year-old PM classes. Our program was held in the church and truly puts you in the Christmas spirit! They are absolutely adorable!

We had a special visitor in the middle of the month that most of the kids love.....SANTA! Each child gets to have their picture taken with him as well!

We spent a lot of time making Christmas gifts for the ones we love! The kids and staff really enjoy making all of these goodies!

Our center was closed for 5 days over the Christmas and New Years holiday. It was a much-needed break to spend some extra time with our families.

Kelly Bork, Director



ANNUAL MEETING NOTICE

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church will be holding its Annual Congregation Meeting on Sunday, January 25, 2026 after the morning service. Please plan to attend, as a quorum of at least 50 voting members will be needed to conduct any business.

*** *In the event of inclement weather on the day of the meeting, an alternate date of February 1, 2026 has been established.***

AUCTION/BRUNCH Thank you!

Social Ministry and friends are so very grateful for the many, many, many folks that helped us with the Virtual & Silent Auctions and Brunch. Some of you donated food or auction items, some bid on auction items, some enjoyed our brunch, and some sadly couldn't come due to the snow and prayed for our event. BUT the totals are in and the final proceeds that will be forwarded to IRAS is (drum roll please)**\$5,785!!!!** WOOHOO!! This far exceeds our goal. THANK YOU all for caring and giving to those in our community who need you the most!

Memorial Gifts to Zion's Ministries

One of the ways we can fondly remember our loved ones is to designate gifts in their memory to Zion Lutheran Church. These memorial gifts are used to further the desired ministries of the donor and the family of the memorialized individual - the ministry of Zion as a whole (within the congregation and/or through the ELCA) or to a particular designated aspect of our ministry.

Between 07/20/2025 and 12/20/2025, the following individuals have had memorial gifts given in their memory and directed to and through Zion Lutheran Church.

♥ Dale Bott	Greatest Needs
♥ Aberdeen Parker	Greatest Needs, Forward in Faith, & Radio
♥ Beverly Havens	Greatest Needs & Forward in Faith
♥ Stan Johannsen	Sack Lunch Ministry
♥ Margo Ketelsen	Greatest Needs & Sack Lunch Ministry
♥ Helen Drury	Greatest Needs & Sack Lunch Ministry

Thank you for remembering the ministries of Zion as your loved ones are remembered.

Faith

FUNDATIONS

We pray that everyone had a blessed Christmas and holiday season. Our lesson this month is Jesus and John the Baptist; we look forward to seeing you all back on Wednesday nights starting **January 7th**.



Just a reminder that Faith FUNDATIONS follows the Clinton School District's decision on winter weather. If there is no school for Clinton, then there will be no Faith FUNDATIONS. You can also check Zion's Facebook page for more information.

Lastly, we would like to welcome our new Music Leader April Blount to Faith FUNDATIONS! We look forward to this music time each week and love filling the auditorium with singing children.



Library News

The One Year Book Of Hope by Nancy Guthrie is a 365-day devotional meant to accompany readers through pain, grief, disappointment or hardship, helping them find comfort and hope in God.

- *Each day includes a Scripture reading and a thoughtful reflection grounded in real-life struggles.
- *The book is organized around 52 weekly themes-topics like "The Love of God," "Heaven: Longing for Home," "School of Suffering," "Joy," and "Letting Go"
- *At the end of each week, there are guided questions for reflection, meditation, and prayer, to help readers process their pain, lean into faith, and find hope beyond their suffering.

Overall it's a gentle companion for anyone walking through loss or hardship-offering daily bites of encouragement, honesty about suffering, and a way to cling to trust in God during difficult seasons. This book was donated by Diane Dinning

Holding On To Hope Also by Nancy Guthrie, is a heartfelt reflection on suffering, written from writer's own experience of deep loss. Using the story of Job as it's framework, she explores how to trust God when life is painful and prayers seem unanswered. She emphasizes God's sovereignty, goodness, and presence even in the darkest seasons. The book invites readers to lament honestly, cling to God's promises, and find real hope-not in changed circumstances, but in God himself and the redemption He promises. Donated by Diane Dinning.

Unwrapping the Greatest Gift, A Family Celebration of Christmas by Ann Voskamp is a Family Advent devotional that follows the Jesse Tree tradition, guiding readers through the Bible's story from creation to Christ's birth. Each day in December includes a Scripture passage, a retold Bible story, a short reflection, and activities that help families see how every part of God's plan leads to Jesus-the "greatest gift". The book encourages families to slow down, connect spiritually, and celebrate Christmas with renewed wonder and gratitude.

To donate a book you think is worth sharing, see Denise Forney, Amanda in the office or simply put it in our library mailbox located by the library door. Thank you

Zion Book Club

Zion's Book Club meets in our Church Library the 3rd Wednesday of each month. Our next meeting is **Wednesday, January 21 @ 10:00 AM** right after Prayer/bible study. We will be sharing the Christmas books we chose of our own or from the Zion Library. We are currently looking for more to join us! no sign up necessary. Just pop in. **All are welcome!**

Confirmation Class Special Project

Essential to being a follower of Christ is not only faith, but also service. We care for others because Christ has cared for us. Faith naturally expresses itself in good deeds. As James put it:

¹⁴ What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if someone claims to have faith but does not have works? Surely that faith cannot save, can it? ¹⁵ If a brother or sister is naked and lacks daily food ¹⁶ and one of you says to them, "Go in peace; keep warm and eat your fill," and yet you do not supply their bodily needs, what is the good of that? ¹⁷ So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead. (James 2:14-17).

So, as part of our confirmation program this year, the students are engaging in a variety of service projects. This January, they are assembling PIT bags in coordination with the local YWCA Empowerment Center.

January is the State's Annual Point In Time (PIT) Count for homelessness. This is a time where the YWCA staff and other volunteers go out into the community, to find and record people on the streets experiencing homelessness. This "count" guides the State in needs in our communities. Other agencies across the State participate as well in their communities. When doing the count, the Y staff always hand out items to people like bottled water, hand warmers, etc.

YOUR HELP IS VITAL! You can help the confirmation students and benefit homeless people in our area by donating items for this project. Listed below are items needed for these PIT bags:

- Bottle of Water
- Granola or Protein bar
- Hand Warmers
- Gloves
- Pair of Socks
- Travel sized toiletries – Shampoo, Conditioner, Lotion, Body Wash, Soap, Comb
- Toothbrush & toothpaste
- ChapSticks

From January 4 to January 18, special baskets will be in the narthex at church to receive your donations. Any and all items are appreciated. Students will be assembling the PIT bags on Wednesday, January 21.

Start the new year off right: give a gift of love for the hurting and homeless in our community and support our young people at Zion. Put your faith to work by donating to this special project.

Thank you!

Annual Reports

As year end approaches, it is time for committees to think about their annual reports. If your report **does not** require end of year financial information, it should have been turned in 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.

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



Monthly Birthday Fellowship

January's birthday fellowship in the Gathering Space will be held on Sunday, January 18th, 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 January. Refreshments and cupcakes will be served.

All are welcome!!!



COUNCIL NEWS

Summary of Congregation Council Minutes – November 11, 2025

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

Pastor's Report: Pastor Barb informed the Council that the process on how the Stewardship cards will be returned during the Saturday and Sunday worship services has been prepared.

Membership Update: Kristi Montgomery shared the Statistical Report for October. Total weekend attendance YTD is 6,008. The average weekend worship attendance YTD is 137.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer, Deb Vath, reported that giving is 5% off YTD pledges. The amount of Expenses vs Income leaves us at (33,000) YTD. A discussion was held concerning the Greatest Needs Funds purpose and the process for requesting funds for needed projects. Linda Dutchess made a motion to accept the Treasurer's Report. Marsha Smith seconded the motion. All ayes.

Old Business:

2026 Budget Process : Deb Vath reported to the Council that all committees have submitted their anticipated expenditures for 2026 with the exception of one committee's budget which will be sent as soon as possible. The Finance Committee will be meeting to work on the budget for 2026.

Nominating Committee: Kristi Montgomery will set a date for this committee to meet.

Stewardship Committee: Linda Dutchess shared with the Council that the letters, cards and a return envelope have been mailed to congregational members with a requested return date of November 15th and 16th.

New Business:

WalMart Business Charge Card: Deb Vath brought before the Council the possibility of opening a new charge card at WalMart for the purchase of groceries for Faith Fundations. It is hoped that buying groceries at WalMart would be a savings over the current account at Hy Vee. It was noted that the groceries would need to be ordered using the online process. The Council had a discussion on the card limit of a Walmart card. Deb Vath made a motion to open an account at WalMart with a \$750 limit. The current limit at Hy Vee is \$500. Laurie Behrens seconded the motion. All ayes.

Congregation Annual Meeting - Kristi Montgomery informed the Council that a date must be approved by the Council for the Annual Meeting. Historically, the date for the Annual Meeting is the last Sunday of January with a contingency date of one week later. These dates are January 25, 2026 and February 01, 2026. Patti Lauritzen moved to accept these dates for the Annual Meeting and Dennis Andersen seconded the motion. All ayes.

FINANCIAL CORNER

November 2025 at a glance

General Operating	November	Year To Date
Income +	\$27,528.50	\$257,035.95
Expense -	\$18,026.86	\$318,504.06
Difference =	\$9,528.03	-\$23,459.89

November In-Person Worship Attendance

Weekend	Saturday	Sunday	Total
November 1 & 2	55	98	153
November 8 & 9	35	73	108
November 15 & 16	48	117	165
November 22 & 23	51	100	151
November 29 & 30	0	0	0
Average * <i>excluding Nov. 29 & 30</i>	47	97	144

WORSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

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.

JANUARY 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
					1 Office Closed	2 5:30 PM: Worship
4 9:00 AM: Worship	5 5:00 PM: Executive Committee 5:50 PM: All-Committee Night	6 5:00 PM: Morning Prayer/ Bible Study 5:15 PM: Faith FUNdations/ Confirmation 5:45 PM: Bell Rehearsal 6:45 PM: Choir Rehearsal	7 5:30 PM: Boy Scouts	8 5:30 PM: Morning Prayer/ Bible Study 5:15 PM: Faith FUNdations/ Confirmation 5:45 PM: Bell Rehearsal 6:45 PM: Choir Rehearsal	9 5:30 PM: Worship	10 5:30 PM: Worship
11 9:00 AM: Worship 2:00 PM: Clinton Symphony Orchestra Concert	12 10:45 AM: Sack Lunch Monday 5:00 PM: Childcare Board 5:30 PM: Girl Scouts	13 5:30 PM: Boy Scouts 6:00 PM: Congregation Council	14 5:30 PM: Morning Prayer/ Bible Study 1:30 PM: Rebecca Circle 5:15 PM: Faith FUNdations/ Confirmation 5:45 PM: Bell Rehearsal 6:45 PM: Choir Rehearsal	15 5:30 PM: Morning Prayer/ Bible Study 1:30 PM: Rebecca Circle 5:15 PM: Faith FUNdations/ Confirmation 5:45 PM: Bell Rehearsal 6:45 PM: Choir Rehearsal	16 5:30 PM: Worship	17 5:30 PM: Worship
18 9:00 AM: Worship 10:00 AM: Birthday Fellowship	19 5:30 PM: Boy Scouts	20 5:30 PM: Boy Scouts	21 5:30 PM: Morning Prayer/ Bible Study 10:00 AM: Zion Book Club 5:15 PM: Faith FUNdations/ Confirmation 5:45 PM: Bell Rehearsal 6:45 PM: Choir Rehearsal	22 9:30 AM: First Circle Friends	23 9:30 AM: First Circle Friends	24 9:30 AM: First Circle Friends
25 9:00 AM: Worship 10:15 AM: Annual Meeting	26 9:00 AM: Quilters 5:30 PM: Girl Scouts	27 5:30 PM: Boy Scouts	28 5:30 PM: Boy Scouts	29 5:30 PM: Worship	30 5:30 PM: Worship	31 5:30 PM: Worship

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Patrick Hoffman, Custodian

OFFICE HOURS

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