December Issue

The ECHOES

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A new church year is upon us! Happy Advent to you all. I'm grateful to spend another year walking with you through the season of hopeful anticipation and loving joy that is Advent. As Christians, we try to turn away from the busyness of our earthly lives and live into the peaceful hope that leads us to remember the birth of our savior; so many years ago and so far away from here, yet so vital and life-giving in our walk as Christians. Let us commit to living more reverently this season, as we anticipate the gift of Jesus, which surpasses the value of all Christmas gifts we have ever received.

To assist us in living more reverently, we have Advent devotionals available on the table in the narthex. Please use them to open your hearts and minds to hear God's word to us each day throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons. I would also like to remind you of the opportunity to gather in Christian community for Bible study on Wednesday mornings at 10am in the Media Room. Joining us for weekly worship on Sundays at 9am fosters our spirits of reverence. And don't forget, we'd love to see you all on Christmas Eve (worship services at 7pm and 11pm).

Our reverence leads us to awe and wonder – how beautiful is this gift from God?!?! Are we worthy? Do we deserve this devotion from God when we can hardly manage to be reverent in our lives? God believes we are worthy, and God has covenanted to be with us eternally. What a divine blessing that is! Worthy of reverence and awe and thanksgiving!

We hear these words from the prophet Isaiah, written in hopeful anticipation: Scripture

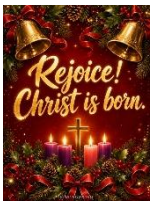
"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness— on them light has shined.
You have multiplied exultation; you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you as with joy at the harvest, as people exult when dividing plunder.

For the yoke of their burden and the bar across their shoulders,
the rod of their oppressor, you have broken as on the day of Midian.
For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders,
and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Great will be his authority, and there shall be endless peace for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it with justice and righteousness from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this."

Can you believe the prophet Isaiah foretold the birth of Jesus 700 years before?!?!

Let us wait in hopeful anticipation, with the assurance of Isaiah and the grace shown to us by Jesus, that this Advent may be a season of hope, love, joy, and peace for all.

December 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 6:30pm – Busy Hands	2 10 – Bible Study 7-Choir AA	3	4 Office Closed	5 5:30pm-7:30pm Drive-Thru Nativity
6 9-Worship w/ Holy Communion 10:15- Catechism Coffee Hour/ Sunday School 5:30pm-7:30pm Drive-Thru Nativity	7 9-Yoga 7:30-Dartball (Home)	8	9 10 – Bible Study 7-AA Office Closed	10 7-Council	11	12 4:30pm-7:30pm Kids Night Out
13 9-Worship 10:15- Catechism Coffee Hour/ Sunday School 4-Blue Christmas	14 9-Yoga 7:30-Dartball @ St. John's #22	15	16 10 – Bible Study 7-Choir AA	17	18 Office Closed	19
20 9-Worship w/ Holy Communion 10:15- Catechism Coffee Hour/ Sunday School	21 9-Yoga	22	23 10 – Bible Study 7-AA	24 Christmas Eve 7- worship w/ Holy Communion & children & choir singing 11- worship w/ Holy Communion	25 	26
27 9-Worship 10:15- Catechism Coffee Hour/ Sunday School	28 9-Yoga	29	30 10 – Bible Study 7-AA	31 Office Closed	Jan 1 Office Closed	

Zion Church Council Minutes – November 12, 2026

Zion Council met in the Barb Moellman Media Center on Thursday, November 12, 2026. The meeting was called to order by President Dave Myerholtz. Hannah read Psalm 36 and shared a prayer. Those present were David Myerholtz, Becky Teal, Beth Schlea, Carrie Strausbaugh, Connie Davies, Tom Fisher, Audrey Sneider, and SAM Hannah Mapus. Stacie Marquart attended via Facetime. Julia Popp was absent and excused.

Two items were added to the agenda. First to increase giving to Synod and second to transfer money. Beth Schlea moved, seconded by Connie Davies to approve the agenda with additions. Motion carried.

Beth Schlea moved, seconded by Carrie Strausbaugh, to accept the Secretary's report as written. Motion carried.

Financial Report: Connie Davies moved, seconded by Tom Fisher, to move $15,000 into the Building Fund from the General Fund. Motion carried. It has been over 5 years since an increase has been made to Zion's Synod contributions. Beth Schlea moved, seconded Audrey Sneider, to increase Zion's Synod contributions from $875/month to $900/month. This is an increase of $25.00 per month. Motion carried. Tom Fisher moved, seconded by Connie Davies, to accept the Financial Report. Motion carried.

Old Business:
Connie Davies moved, seconded by Stacie Marquart, to accept the description of the Finance Committee as presented. Motion carried.

The contract with Restore Pro has been completed. This was to remove the mold and mildew in the parsonage. The appliances have been saved. An estimation of $750 plus volunteer help was given for adding needed wallboard and insulation to the parsonage before winter. Help to do this work will be requested at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

The agenda for the Annual Congregational Meeting on November 15 was reviewed.

The Annual Staff Contracts were discussed. The Executive Committee and Staff Assistance Committee will continue to work on this.

New Business:
National Youth Gathering initial registration has been completed. A charter bus arranged by the Eastern Conference will take the students to Minneapolis.

Council accepted the proposed budget to be presented to the congregation at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

The Ministry of Property Management and The Ministry of Outreach Reports were accepted as written.

The Executive Committee Report and The SAM Report were accepted as written.

Correspondence: A thank you for use of the parking lot for Walk to School Day was received from Hilfiker Elementary. A donation from the Moellman Family in honor of Barb and her parents was given for the 150 Anniversary Celebration.

Stacie Marquart moved, seconded by Carrie Strausbaugh, to adjourn. Motion carried. The meeting was closed by all praying The Lord's Prayer.

Next meeting is Thursday, December 10, 2026 at 7 PM. Reporting will be Staff Assistance and Worship & Music Committees.

Respectfully submitted, Becky Teal

2026 Advent Season



December 5 – 5:30-6:30pm - Drive-Thru nativity

December 6 – 9:00am Worship – Advent 2 with Holy Communion

5:30-6:30pm - Drive-Thru nativity

December 13 – 9:00am Worship – Advent 3

4:00pm Blue Christmas Service

December 20 – 9:00am Worship – Advent 4 with Holy Communion

December 24 – Christmas Eve worship services with Holy Communion
7:00pm with children and choir singing
11:00pm

December 27 – 9:00am Worship – Christmas Sunday



BLUE CHRISTMAS

For some people, the Advent and Christmas seasons can be a painful time. It may be the first Christmas without a loved one; this season may bring feelings of pain from other losses in life, like of good health, or a job, or a relationship; this may be a season of loneliness and heartache; or this may be a season that has always been difficult. The constant refrain on radio and television, in stores and in churches, about the happiness of the season, about getting together with family and friends, reminds many people of what they have lost or what they have never had. The anguish of broken relationships, the insecurity of unemployment, the weariness of ill health, the pain of isolation - all these can make us feel very alone. In the midst of celebrating the season, we need the space and time to acknowledge our sadness and concern, and to take comfort in knowing we are not alone. Our spirits sink as the days grow shorter. We feel the darkness growing deeper around us. We need encouragement to live the days ahead of us.

For these reasons, Gibsonburg Area Ministerial Association (GAMA) will hold a special Blue Christmas service on Sunday, December 13th at 4:00pm at Zion Lutheran Church in Gibsonburg.

Please join us in prayer, scripture, and music that acknowledges God's presence for those who mourn, for those who struggle - and that God's Word comes to shine light into our darkness. Everyone, regardless of church background (or lack of it) is welcome.

This service will be followed by a time for fellowship and refreshments.

May the peace of Christ be with you this season and always.





2026 Eastern Conference Youth Event

The congregations of the Eastern Conference of the Northwest Ohio Synod of the ELCA (which are Zion, Gibsonburg; Faith, Fremont; St. Mark's, Fremont; St. John's, Fremont; Grace, Fremont; St. John's, Bellevue; Grace, Castalia; St. Peter, Norwalk; Zion, Huron; St. John's Sandusky; Trinity, Sandusky; Zion, Sandusky) gathered at Grace Lutheran Church in Fremont on Sunday, November 15th. Middle school and high school youth were encouraged to attend and adults were welcome too. In total, I think about 50 people participated (14 from Zion, Gibsonburg!).

We began sharing a pizza lunch and fellowship. Pastor Adam Wutka (St. Peter, Norwalk) and Cindy Mira (St. John's, Bellevue) then led us in fun praise songs on their guitars. We played some get-to-know-you games and (tried) to mingle with the other congregation members.

Bishop Daniel led us in a Visio Divina exercise and then encouraged us with an impactful message about faith and what we practice in our lives. We were honored to be able to listen and learn from our bishop! He's a great teacher and a kid at heart (ask the kids about the yellow Skittles)!

We then participated in a Poverty Experience. This was very eye-opening, educational, and heart-wrenching. We were able to (in a very small way) experience what some of God's children endure in being homeless or unhoused. We learned how difficult it is for our neighbors to receive housing in our nation. Please ask the kids about this experience, I was impressed by their engagement in the exercise. They even expressed frustration with the current programs and policies. We learned a big lesson in empathy in this exercise.

After we reflected on our Poverty Experience, we gathered in the Fellowship Hall to prepare a Thanksgiving dinner for those less fortunate or homeless in Fremont. The kids set the tables and took orders like waiters and waitresses. They served the 80 people who gathered for a warm meal and gave thanks to God who guides us, provides for us, and loves us endlessly.

After they served and cleaned up from the guests, the kids enjoyed the meal too (ask Jacoby and Grayson what they think about gravy...). We cleared tables, washed and dried dishes (lots of thanks to David Stevens for sharing his expertise with us. He was a great asset!) and came home tuckered-out.



I would like everyone to know how proud I was to be part of the Zion, Gibsonburg group. Our young people (and the older ones too!) are kind, generous, gentle, humble, and Christ-centered. I am grateful for this experience and opportunity to spend the day with this group. I'm looking forward to the next event and other ways to be the hands and feet of Jesus in the world.

Visio Divina
"divine seeing"

Visio divina is similar to lectio divina, but it focuses on "divine seeing". Select an image, icon, photo, or mural. You may choose to pair it with a verse from scripture. Consider the following questions:

First Look

What do you see?

Slowly scan the image. What do you notice? What is your eye drawn to?

Second Look

What do you feel?

As you look again at the image, be attentive to how it makes you feel. Share a word or phrase that summarizes your feelings.

Third Look

What is God saying to me?

Look again at the image. What is God trying to say to you through this art?

Fourth Look

What is God inviting me to do?

Consider the art one last time. What will carry with you. To what action might God be inviting you?

Growing In Faith Ohio

December Birthdays

1 – Ashley Gerwin
Kevin Brant
4 – Curtis Bursiek
Andrea Pritt
Duane Gerwin
5 – Tim Fisher
8 – Beth Schlea
9 – Alex Fairbanks
12 – Joyce Hansen
Brandon Murray
13 – Lori Cramer
14 – Alexa Evarts
17 – Lillian Schroeder
20 – Julie Villarreal
23 – Holly Murray
28 – Ben Gunder
Bryson Marinoff
31 – Courtney Velliquette



Acolytes/Readers

Sunday, December 6
A – Jacoby Evarts
R – Beth Schlea
and Elly Evarts
WL – Hannah Mapus

Sunday, December 13
A – Keegan Strausbaugh
R – Stephen Marquart
and Brynn Mapus
WL – Hannah Mapus

Sunday, December 20
A – Owen Kirwen
R – David Myerholtz
and Bella Stevens
WL – Hannah Mapus

Sunday, December 27
A – Bella Stevens
R – Gene Fox
and Cameron Strausbaugh
WL – Hannah Mapus

Cheer Bags



It's that time of year again! Outreach will be distributing Cheer Bags to our members and others in the community. If you know someone who would like to receive a bag and can assist with delivery, please contact the office by December 14. Additionally, if you would like to contribute items, please visit the donation board located near the kitchen. Outreach will be assembling the bags on December 17, and they will be ready for distribution on December 20. Thank you for your support!

Zion Church Council

Interim Minister: Hannah Mapus
President: David Myerholtz
Vice-President:
Secretary: Becky Teal
Treasurer: Beth Schlea

Ministries

Worship & Music: Audrey Sneider
Christian Education: Carrie Strausbaugh
Outreach: Julia Popp
Staff Assistance: Connie Davies
Stewardship: Stacie Marquart
Property Management:





Deadline for donation:
December 20, 2026

Checks may be made payable to:
Zion Lutheran Church

Please include donation with form
and send to the church office:
500 S. Brentwood Dr.
Gibsonburg, OH 43431

Donation Amount: _____
Name: _____
Phone: _____
In Loving Memory of (Deceased):
_____
_____
In Honor of (Living):
_____
_____