

Fourth Sunday In Advent

December 21, 2025

10:15 a.m.

(* Indicates: all who are able to please stand.)

WE ENTER GOD'S PRESENCE

PRELUDE

WELCOME & ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE PEACE

CALL TO WORSHIP *Prepare the Way, O Zion*

WE OPEN OURSELVES TO GOD

OPENING SENTENCES

L: We gather together in this place:

P: **prophets and dreamers, singers and poets,**

L: we who dare to imagine a world renewed;

P: **We who dare to dream God's dream.**

L: We speak out with Zechariah.

P: **God's name be blessed forever!**

L: For God has remembered us in mercy,

P: **and remained faithful to us in love.**

L: Because of God's tender compassion,

P: **the dawn from on high will rise over us.**

L: Come and worship, all you who dream and wait.

P: **We have come to wonder and praise.**

*HYMN *Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*

*ADVENT PRAYER

God of liberation, your love reaches beyond all boundaries of prejudice and fear. Your tenderness is offered not only to the powerful or deserving, but to all people, according to your infinite compassion. Teach us to love widely and boldly, honoring the dignity of all and trusting your promise that the way of love is the way of life, Amen.

ADVENT CANDLE LIGHTING

ADVENT CANDLE PRAYER

God of whispers and shouts, you proclaim the good news of joy from all corners of creation. As we turn to our scriptures, may the words inspire us to dream of a world where love thrives among us. Amen.

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PRESENTATION

Away In a Manger

Joy to the World

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

GOD'S WORD FOR US

SCRIPTURE READING Matthew 1:18-25

MESSAGE *What Love Looks Like*

WE RESPOND TO GOD'S WORD

*HYMN *I Sing the Praise of Love Unbounded*

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE Arnie & Jan Watkins, Maxine, Crosby Family, end to gun violence, K. J., Karen Hauser, Holly and family of Bob Antkowiak, Lois Wilmot, Steve Theisinger, Debbie, Ristau Family, Family of Gene, Kevin Kramer, Dixie, Dawn & Ron Narczewski, Deb Cooper, Ryan, Cindy Harzheim, Paul Lewis, Marilyn Haslam.

PASTORAL PRAYER

THE LORD'S PRAYER (debts)

PRAYER RESPONSE *O Thou Joyful*

OFFERING

RESPONSE *Angels We Have Heard On High*

***PRAYER OF DEDICATION Holy God, we bring our gifts and offerings to you because the voices of the prophets remind us of something bigger, something greater than any system this world offers us. We believe when we trust you with our resources, the kingdom of God comes much closer to reality on earth. Help us steward these gifts to create abundant life and love. Amen.**

*HYMN *O Little Town of Bethlehem*
BENEDICTION
POSTLUDE

Announcements

New Prayer Requests

Maxine, for health
Gun violence
Crosby family
Arnie & Jan, for health

A Memorial in Loving Memory of David Splittstoesser was given by Georgia Splittstoesser.

A note of thanks from the Illinois Valley Food Pantry:

The total weight collected from the Harvest home Food drive was 748 pounds! Thank you all so very much for having the food so well organized and packed. It really saved a lot of time to put everything in its place to distribute. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Please join us for fellowship refreshments after worship today.

The DePue UCC will host a beautiful, contemplative service this afternoon at 2:00 pm in their sanctuary. Mimi Cofoid, RN, Faith Community Nurse, will lead the service, and Jeannie Brown will provide beautiful Christmas piano music. We will reflect on the journey Mary and Joseph made to Bethlehem, and the journey/transformation their hearts and minds made as they traveled. We will acknowledge that sometimes Christmas celebrations are not always 'merry and bright' and it is okay to feel our emotions during this time. Candles will be lit to remember loved ones this holiday season. All are invited and welcome!

*If you would like to make an announcement during worship, please request a microphone. Thank you!

Tune in to Pastor Alex every Sunday morning at 8:25 on 103.9 WLPO. Be sure to spread the word to your friends!

Join the CREW! Our Sunday School program, **CREW**, is meeting again every Sunday at 9:00 AM. Kids in kindergarten through 5th grade are invited to join us for stories, games, crafts, and activities that help build faith and friendships. We're excited to see you this Sunday!

Giving Tree Update-We're delighted to share that all the gifts for our adopted family have been purchased, wrapped, and delivered. Thanks to the incredible generosity of our Zion Church family, four children will experience a brighter and more joy-filled Christmas this year. Your kindness and giving spirit truly reflect the love of Christ at work among us. A special thank-you to Terri Kelly for coordinating this wonderful effort and ensuring everything came together so beautifully. Thank you all for sharing God's love through this project!

Join us for Christmas Eve candlelight service at 7:00 pm in-person or on YouTube.

We are blessed to welcome **Keith Jarosz** to the pulpit on Sunday, December 28! Keith, a newer member of Zion, will be bringing the morning message. Keith is experiencing a powerful spiritual awakening and has recently written several heartfelt songs that reflect his journey of faith and life. Come and be inspired as he shares his story with us during worship.

Please Note: Pastor Alex will be on vacation beginning December 29th and will be back in the office January 5th. Rev. Kay Harding will preach on Jan 4th. and will be available for emergencies. Her phone number is: (815)993-9220

Tuesday Night Bible Study will take a break through the holidays. We'll resume on Tuesday, January 6, 2026.

2026 Offering envelopes are available in the narthex in December. Please continue to use your 2025 envelopes, sending

your donations, or giving online as you have been doing. Any donations given until December 31, 2025 will be credited to 2025 giving statements. After January 1, 2026 donations will be credited to 2026 giving statements. If you are unable to pick up your 2026 envelopes, use any envelope and put your name and date on it when you donate your contribution. Your envelope number will be the same as you have this year. If you have leftover 2025 envelopes, you can use one of those and write the 2026 date on it. If you are giving for more than one week, you do not have to use a separate envelope (or a separate check) for each week. You can mark the envelope for the weeks that are covered in it. Zion Church again thanks you for your continued support during these hard times. Your generosity has been a blessing for the continued operation and mission of Zion.

Feeding the Future – The Illinois Valley Food Pantry launched a major fundraiser to fund their new building purchase, necessary renovations, and expanded food programs —so that we can continue to serve the growing number of individuals and families in need across our region. Local individuals, churches and businesses are joining together to make this vision a reality. Learn more or donate at www.ivfoodpantry.com or by contacting the Pantry directly.

Did you know? Copies of the hymns and large print bulletins are located in the Narthex.

Prayer Requests In the Bulletin We are grateful for the privilege of praying for one another. To help us keep our prayer list current, each new request will be included in the bulletin for four weeks. After that time, we will remove it unless we are asked to continue sharing it longer. If you would like a request to remain, please let us know—we want to walk alongside you in prayer for as long as you need.

Zion UCC is providing a delicious hot meal delivered to the **Peru PADS homeless shelter** each month. Every little bit helps us provide a nutritious meal each month through May. Write a check to the church and note "**PADS Meals.**" Or go online and donate through the Giving page on our website. Your donation helps

provide a healthy, hearty meal to those who need it most. Thank you for your generosity and support in feeding the hungry!

HELP WANTED! Ushers: We are building a new Ushers List. If you previously served as usher and would like to serve again, we would like to add you to the new ushers list. Previously ushers served for an entire month. Ushers now will serve when they are available to serve even for a single Sunday. You can let Larry Grosenbach know you will serve as usher or email ushers@zionperu.org to be added to the ushers list. Evangelism: We are updating our visitor information about Zion church and will be creating a visitor packet that will contain our new updated information about Zion Church and a thank you gift or two for them visiting. If you would like to help the Evangelism Team with the visitor project you can let Pastor Alex, Jerry Koehler or email evangelism@zionperu.org.

Live Life (Pre and Post Transplant Support Group) meets the second Monday of each month at 6:30pm at Zion UCC.

The Compassionate Friends Group meets at Zion every fourth Thursday at 6:30pm. This meeting is open to any parent who has lost a child. Please contact the church office for information.

Weight Watchers is meeting every Saturday morning at 8:00 here at Zion. We're happy to provide space for this worthwhile service to our community.

Tonica Church is collecting personal hygiene products to give away. Items needed include: *Bar soap *Shower gel *Shampoo Razors *Deodorant *Toothbrushes *Toothpaste *Combs or Brushes *Contact Diane Gebhardt with any questions!

You can now donate to Zion by Text to (815)393-1954

Enter the amount you want to give to Zion in the Text box and send. If it the first time you are giving by text you will be prompted to set up your giving method (credit card or bank account).

Zion United Church of Christ
6th & Grant Streets, Peru, IL

Follow us on Facebook: Zion UCC, Peru, IL
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Ministers	Members of the Congregation
Pastor	Pastor Alex Garncarz
Organist	Jim Greening
Secretary	Erin Lewis
Liturgist	Larry Grosenbach
Audio Technician	Jerry Koehler
Video Technician	Rhonda Essl
Song Leader	Dave Jacobson
Fellowship	Diane Gebhardt and Bonnie Anderson

Attendance: In Person: 36 + 7 children
On YouTube: 15

This week:

Tuesday, December 23rd

PADS Meal

Wednesday, December 24th

7:00pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service

Thursday, December 25th

Merry Christmas!

Saturday, December 27th

8:00am Weight Watchers meeting

Sunday, December 28th

8:25am Pastor Alex on WLPO

9:30am Choir practice

Office Hours this week

Monday-Closed

Tuesday-12:00pm-5:00pm

Wednesday-Closed

Thursday- Closed

*Friday- 9:00am -5:00pm *