



*Zion Lutheran Church  
Arlington, MN*

# January Newsletter

January 2026

Church Address:  
814 W. Brooks St, PO Box 371  
Arlington MN 55307  
Phone: 507-964-5454  
Email: zion.elca.814@gmail.com

## *Note from Pastor Gretchen*

### *Chattin' It Up...*

- Annual Meeting Notice
- ZCW Quilting Days
- Paving The Way Update

#### **Inside this issue:**

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A new year's prayer from Dag Hammarskjöld:  
*For all that has been - thank you God.  
For all that will be - yes God.*

Gratitude is a good practice for any new beginning. As I anticipate the new year, I am looking at the Thankoffering envelopes for 2025 and the sentiments of gratitude that Zion members wrote.

I am moved by the sentiment "where do I start?" I too am grateful for all God's blessings too numerous to count. Sometimes I can be overwhelmed with gratitude like confetti on New Years Eve in Time Square. I hope you have had that experience too.

Your Thankoffering expressions of gratitude included "In thanks for...a loving and caring family, for a new marriage in the family, for health, for numerous things, for all my blessings, for God's mercy and love. Several Thankoffering gifts were given without expression. Which also speaks of the volume of grace upon grace received in this past year.

In addition to the things to be thankful for, many experienced losses in 2025. It seems every year there are people who just want the year to be over. The Psalms are a prayer book of the church which express both gratitude and cries for mercy. In the front part of your hymnal is the complete book of Psalms. Page through it sometime and see what leaps off the page into your heart in times of gratitude or loss.

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Each week in worship we read the sacred story of God's blessings in human history. Remembering God's faithfulness, fed by God's word and by Christ's body and blood, we are sent into the world to witness and proclaim the goodness of God.

I'm not much for New Year's Resolutions, but a friend posted this in December as a thought to strive for, and it seems fitting as something to strive for in the new year:

*May your new year  
be filled with grace over perfection,  
presence over pressure,  
and love over everything else.*

With gratitude for you and the ministry we share,  
Pastor Gretchen

.....

## **NOTICE OF Zion Annual Meeting**

**Sunday, January 11, 2026**

9:00 am Call to Order  
Recessed and  
Reconvened Following Church Service

Agenda, minutes, and proposed budget will be  
placed in church mailbox prior to meeting date.

Zion Lutheran Church  
814 W Brooks Street, PO Box 371  
Arlington, MN 55307  
507-964-5454  
Email: [zion.elca.814@gmail.com](mailto:zion.elca.814@gmail.com)  
[www.zionarlington.org](http://www.zionarlington.org)

## In the Lives of our Members

- |    |                 |                     |
|----|-----------------|---------------------|
| 4  | Samantha Kahlow |                     |
| 5  | Deb Otto        |                     |
| 5  | Dylan Scharpe   |                     |
| 6  | Sean Drexler    |                     |
| 7  | Joann Beneke    |                     |
| 7  | Myrna Scharpe   |                     |
| 8  | Dan Osborne     |                     |
| 14 | James Carlson   | 16 Jackie Alsleben  |
| 14 | Keith Herd      | 16 Benjamin Arneson |
|    |                 | 16 Laurie Stern     |
|    |                 | 17 Wendy Wark       |
|    |                 | 19 Jan Giesen       |
|    |                 | 19 Alice Foss       |
|    |                 | 22 Willie Robinson  |
|    |                 | 26 Blake Battcher   |
|    |                 | 28 Dan Scharpe      |



January 7, 1995    Brett & Julie Beneke  
 January 22, 1966    Lyle & Betty Rud



### Hold up in prayer....

Christy Hebeisen in her battle with cancer

Dilshad Perani—family friend of Kamps family.  
 Battling rare chronic disease.



### Remember Our Homebound Members

Bayside Manor  
 Rhoda Woehler  
 Lyle Woehler

French Meadow-LeSueur  
 Deb Otto

At home in Winsted  
 Luverne Bergs

May Creek, Walker, MN  
 Gary Revier

At home in Arlington  
 Hylma Matzke



**Zion Lutheran Church**  
**Church Council Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday, December 10, 2025**

The regular monthly meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. by Vice-President J Hazelwood.

**Attendance:**

President: Larry Gieseke	Bd/Deacon: Michael Christeson	Bd/Worship & Music: Ann Werner
Vice President: Jon Hazelwood	Bd/Trustee: Rich Nagel	Pastor: Pr. Gretchen Pierskalla
Secretary: Roseann Nagel	Bd/Education: Stephanie Krueger	
Treasurer: Bruce Kallhoff	Bd/Stewardship: Starla Schilling	
Others present:		

Devotions were provided by Pr. Gretchen Pierskalla.

**MOTION BY B KALLHOFF, SECONDED BY RICH NAGEL TO APPROVE THE AGENDA WITH ONE NEW BUSINESS ITEM – SAFEGUARD FROM ABUSE POLICY – ADDED. MOTION APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE.**

**Secretary's Report:** Minutes for November council meeting were published in newsletter and emailed to Council prior to meeting. **MOTION BY RICH NAGEL, SECONDED BY M CHRISTESON TO APPROVE MINUTES. MOTION APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE.**

**Treasurer's Report:** Treasurer's Report was emailed to Council members prior to meeting. Financials reflect a year-to-date deficit of \$27,412 in expenditures. The \$20,000 of authorized line of credit has been used towards this deficit to pay expenses. (\$20,000 line of credit owed to the bank is part of the \$27,412 deficit.) Checking account balance is \$185.00.

A \$20,000 CD was purchased with a six-month maturity date for funds received and designated as "Parking Lot Fund."

**MOTION BY A WERNER, SECONDED BY S KREUGER TO APPROVE TREASURER'S REPORT. MOTION APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE.**

**Pastor's Report:** Several special worship events including Thanksgiving service and the beginning of Advent. -- Confirmation classes and Jr high youth gathering with Pastor and Scott as chaperones. -- Participated in various meetings, community events and continuing education. -- Made pastoral calls. (see attachment)

New member Sunday will be December 21, New members: Kevin Kamps, Alex and Cassidy Battcher, Noah and possibly one other.

Transfer membership out of Zion to All Saints Lutheran, NYA: Kevin and Nancy Biermann.

**Board of Deacons:** M Christeson – Decorated Church December 23 with thanks going to those that helped. Will be filling Christmas goodie bags this week. Decorations will be taken down January 4 after church.

**Board of Stewardship:** S Schilling – Nativity Stroll had 77 nativities from members for viewing. \$571.00 was received in donations and meal purchases. -- Hunger Jar for December will be for Feed My Starving Children as well as the December 21 Clattering Coins collection. December 31 will participate in a Feed My Starving Children event. Several bags of Elephant Jo coffee remain for purchase.

**Board of Trustees:** Rich Nagel – L Schiroo has feelers out for water detection devices in basement. – Water fountain in basement under Narthex is malfunctioning. Trustees will try to repair before contacting a repair service. – Will be looking at main entrance heater as blower is not working as it should. – L Schiroo discovered when he was in attic that a vent screen is off and needs to be replaced. -- Replaced frosted privacy material on south bathrooms. -- Working on quotes for handicapped entrance door as proposed by the Memorial Committee at the November meeting. Confirmed with Council that the intention was handicapped door and opener. Will report back when quotes are received.

**Board of Worship and Music:** A Werner – Music and hymns were chosen through January.

**Board of Education:** S Krueger -- Statutorily mandated Safeguard training for individuals working with youth has been completed by three individuals and must be completed by three additional individuals. -- Made banner baptismal shell for baptism banner last Sunday for Weston Fredin -- The Sunday School Christmas Program will be Sunday, December 14. -- There will be a Youth Lock-In this January in Hutchinson.

### **Standing Committees**

President Gieseke dispensed with Standing Committee reports for all except Constitution. Constitution -- President Gieseke did request the Council think about considering changing By-Laws to policies. -- President Gieseke read a document to the Council from the SW MN Synod Council with recommended Constitution amendments and where the information can be found on their website. (see attachment)

### **Old Business**

1. Proposed 2026 Budget for Annual Meeting – Rich Nagel presented the proposed 2026 budget from the Trustees and Treasurer. The budget was reviewed. Council discussed that more benevolence is given by Zion than reflected in financial reports because some giving does not come out of the general budget checkbook and perhaps groups within the church donating funds from their checkbooks should be included in the year-end report to the Synod. This can be reviewed by the Treasurer and other groups, i.e., ZCW, Sunday School, etc. for future years.

**MOTION BY ROSEANN NAGEL AND SECONDED BY B KALLHOFF TO APPROVE PROPOSED 2026 BUDGET AS PRESENTED AND TO BRING SAID BUDGET TO THE ANNUAL MEETING FOR FINAL APPROVAL BY THE CONGREGATION. MOTION APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE.**

2. Nominating Committee Report – L Gieseke – List of nominees was handed out. Nominations for Council Secretary (elected), Sunday School Superintendent (appointed) continue to remain open. Two members to the Nominating Committee are needed and Michael Christeson and Starla Schilling have agreed to be on the ballot per recommendation of Constitution to have two outgoing Council members on the ballot for the Nominating Committee. **MOTION BY S KRUEGER AND SECONDED BY L GIESEKE TO APPROVE PROPOSED BALLOT OF NOMINEES FOR ELECTION AT 2026 ANNUAL MEETING. MOTION APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE.**

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3. Parking Lot Committee Report – B Kallhoff – Parking lot fund has now reached \$68,350.00 – Eighteen bags of coffee remain for sale – Chicken Dinner fundraiser committee will be setting date for some time in March 2026.
4. Minnesota Paid Leave Law – Employees have been notified of their rights under the new MN law. Appropriate accounts have been created and the Council Treasurer will act as the Administrator and contact person. Employees are eligible to apply for paid time off beginning January 1, 2026 through an application process to the State of MN and employer is notified when State approves.
5. Funeral Policy -- The current Funeral Policy addresses non-funeral home funerals indicating a checklist for those funerals without the assistance of a funeral home. The checklist will be an administrative working document that can be revised by staff from time to time as deemed necessary to make funeral planning as easy as possible for the family during their time of bereavement. -- It was determined that Funeral Policy stipends and fees need to be reviewed. L Gieseke will review and compare with Wedding Policy and General Policies for consistency between policies and bring recommendation to January Council meeting.
6. Safeguard Policy – Board of Ed member S Krueger presented the “Safeguard from Abuse” proposed policy. This is a State mandated policy to protect youth from abuse. (see attachment) **MOTION BY ROSEANN NAGEL AND SECONDED BY L GIESEKE TO APPROVE THE “SAFEGUARD FROM ABUSE POLICY” INCLUDING TRAINING AND BACKGROUND CHECKS. THIS POLICY TO REMAIN ON FILE WITH OFFICAL CHURCH POLICIES AND PUBLISHED ANNUALLY IN THE YEAR BOOK. MOTION APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE.**
7. Council Spending Limits – Reviewed Council Constitutional spending limit for non-budgeted items. (2019 Constitution C12.05.a (second a))

### **New Business**

1. 2026 Annual Meeting -- **MOTION BY RICH NAGEL AND SECONDED BY S KRUEGER TO SET THE 2026 ANNUAL MEETING DATE FOR SUNDAY JANUARY 11, 2026. MOTION APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE.**
2. Installation of Officers will take place January 18, 2026.

**Adjournment: MOTION BY S KRUEGER AND SECONDED BY L GIESEKE TO ADJOUN. MOTION APPROVED BY VOICE VOTE.** Meeting adjourned by Vice President J Hazelwood at 8:43 p.m.

Meeting ended with Lord’s Prayer.

### **Upcoming Meetings:**

Committee Night, Thursday, January 8, 2026, 6:30 pm

Church Council, Wednesday, January 14, 2026, 7:00 pm

Roseann Nagel,  
Council Secretary

Approved: pending

**ZCW**

**January Bible Study Group**

Tuesday & Wednesday Circle

Thursday, January 22, 2026—6:00pm

Combined Potluck, Bible Study & General Meeting

**2025 Thankoffering Thank You**

The ZCW Thankoffering committee would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who so generously gave a Thankoffering this year. Zion continues to give to so many causes and your support of this cause is so appreciated! A total of \$757.25 was given and will be divided equally between ELCA World Hunger and WELCA (Women of the ELCA).

Again, thank you from the 2025 ZCW Thankoffering committee

Brenda Danielson

Nancy Mathwig

Ann Werner



# Office News

## Directory Updates

Please get any updates including physical address, mailing address, phone number or email address to Stacy. We are starting to look ahead to the Annual Report.

## 2026 Offering Envelopes

The 2026 Offering Envelopes will be looking different this year. As a cost savings, this year we will provide each family with 15 non-individualized envelopes in their church mailbox. Additional envelopes will be available in the last slot of our mailboxes. When filling out the envelope, please remember to put your name on the envelope, these envelopes are not numbered as in the past. If you do have envelopes from this year (2025) you can continue to use those into the new year.



COMMITTEE  
*night*



**Zion Board and Committee Night**

**Thursday, January 8 at 6:30p**

Meet with your Board or Committee and collaborate with others on shared ministry ideas. At 7:30 p.m. gather for ministry sharing fellowship with refreshments and prayer.

# Paving the Way

## UPDATE



The Parking Lot Fundraising project is wrapping up its fall campaign with the Elephant Joe's coffee fundraiser project. Sales so far have been \$1628. Just a few bags left to sell.

Another 9 car sticker amount of donations have come in during November and December, bringing totals to 43 parking spots and \$73,000 raised so far.

December brought us the Arlidazzle Nativity Scene tour. \$204 raised in coffee sales, \$555 raised in lunch sales. It is exciting to see how each small activity adds up fast!

The next anticipated project will be the upcoming chicken dinner.

Please let the committee know your fundraising planned idea, every little bit brings us closer, we are already at 40% of our fundraising goal!

Core Parking Lot Committee

## November Giving 2025

	<u>Attendance</u>	<u>Parking Lot</u>	<u>Hunger Jar</u>	<u>World Hunger</u>	<u>Food Shelf</u>
11/2/2025	87	\$210.00	\$103.59		\$50.00
11/9/2025	62	\$300.00	\$49.87	\$12.00	\$12.00
11/16/2025	49		\$43.58		
11/23/2025	63	\$1,155.00	\$36.00		
11/30/2025	56	\$100.00	\$47.33	\$12.00	\$12.00



## Board of Stewardship

### Nativity Set Stroll

Thank you for sharing and setting up your Nativity scene for the Nativity Stroll; it was appreciated and enjoyed by many. 78 Nativity Sets were shared by 18 members and we earned over \$600 for the Parking Lot Fund. Thank you!

**Hunger Jar** for the month of January has been designated to Sibley County FoodShare.



**Feed My Starving Children** packing event.  
December 31, 12-1:45pm meet in the parking lot  
for carpool at 10:45.  
Sign up on the clipboard outside of  
Pr. Gretchen's office

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### When life gets out of control

In September 2024, a North Dakota teen's car malfunctioned, becoming unstoppable and reaching 113 miles per hour. For 40 minutes, 18-year-old Sam navigated a bridge into Minnesota, intersections with train tracks and highways, small towns and — almost— the road's dead end.

But after Sam called his mom and 911, multiple first responders gathered. Police drove near him, staying on the phone and calmly asking about the accelerator, emergency brake and remaining gas. Ambulance crews were ready. The highway patrol laid speed sticks to puncture the tires (it didn't work) and cleared intersections ahead of the runaway vehicle. All the while, Sam's mom prayed. Finally, an officer sped ahead so Sam could run into his squad car, bringing his own to a halt.

Not making light of what could have turned tragic, sometimes our lives get out of control too. We speed through work, school, relationships, parenting — trying to accomplish, achieve and gain faster than others. We cram as much in each day as possible, seemingly unable to slow down. The harried pace can endanger our physical, mental and spiritual health.

Often, we're "saved" only as people who care come alongside us to help. Perhaps family members express concern, professionals suggest remedies, loved ones pray for us. Finally, when all we can do is crash into the loving care of God, we come to rest. It may take time to recover emotionally, to dare get back "behind the wheel," to trust life to carry us at a safe speed again. But thanks be to God for placing support systems around us when we need them most.

—Heidi Hyland Mann

# January Bible Readings

## **January 4 – Second Sunday of Christmas**

Jeremiah 31:7-14 - Joy at the gathering of God's scattered flock

Psalm 147:12-20

Ephesians 1:3-14 - The will of God made known in Christ

John 1:[1-9] 10-18 - God with us: the incarnation of the Word

## **January 11 – Baptism of Our Lord**

Isaiah 42:1-9 - The servant of the LORD brings justice

Psalm 29

Acts 10:34-43 - Jesus' ministry after his baptism

Matthew 3:13-17 - Revelation of Christ as God's servant

## **January 18 – Second Sunday after Epiphany**

Isaiah 49:1-7 - The servant brings light to the nations

Psalm 40:1-11

1 Corinthians 1:1-9 - Paul's greeting to the church at Corinth

John 1:29-42 - Revelation of Christ as the Lamb of God

## **January 25 – Third Sunday after Epiphany**

Isaiah 9:1-4 - Light shines for those in darkness

Psalm 27:1, 4-9

1 Corinthians 1:10-18 - Appeal for unity in the gospel

Matthew 4:12-23 - Revelation of Christ as a prophet



## CONFIRMATION CORNER



### Class Dates

January 7	4-5:30p	6-8th Grade Class
	6:30-8p	9th Grade Class
January 21	4-5:30p	6-8th Grade Class
	6:30-8p	9th Grade Class
January 7	4-5:30p	6-8th Grade Class
	6:30-8p	9th Grade Class

### **6-8th Grade Wednesdays at 4-5:30pm**

January 7—Caleb the Spy

We are to have faith and trust in God

January 21—Ruth

No one is outside God's reach or love

January 28—Prophets, Judges and Kings

Sometimes we make poor choices and there are consequences

**Agape Concert and Pizza at Hutchinson Event Center 5:45-7:45pm (carpool 5pm – 8:30pm)**

**RETREAT: Friday February 6-February 7 (Required)**

### **9th Grade Wednesdays 6:30p-8p**

January 7—Congregational Life, and Living Faith

January 21—Spiritual Gifts, and Vocation

January 28—Agape Concert: TIME SHIFT 5pm-8:30pm SIGN UP REQUIRED

**RETREAT: Friday February 6-February 7 (Required)**

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## **Agape in Concert with the SWMN Synod youth band**

Wednesday January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2026

Hutchinson Event Center 1005 MN-15, Hutchinson

5:45-6:15pm Pizza – please RSVP by January 25.

Concert at 6:30-7:45pm.

No charge for admission, free will donation checks payable to River of Hope.

\*Agape was the speaker and provided music at the Jr High Youth Gathering in November and was enjoyed by the youth and adults who attended.

We will gather at 5pm to carpool to Hutchinson and return to Zion by 8:30pm.

**Sign up outside Pastor Gretchen's office by January 25.**

## With Thankful Hearts

Thank you for your recent generous gift for supporting the services of Lutheran Social Services of Minnesota. Together, we are neighbors helping neighbors.

*LSS Church Partnership Team*

thank  
you

We would like to thank you for your contribution to the Sibley County FoodShare. Your generosity continues to provide emergency assistance to the hungry of Sibley County. We appreciate your thoughtfulness.

*Lisa Eyrich  
Sibley County FoodShare*

Thank you to those who provided goodies for Fellowship Hour in November

Larry Gieseke  
Joe Prasad  
Darrel & Jackie Alsleben  
Neil & Lorraine Mielke  
Brad & Brenda Danielson



Zion Lutheran Church services can be viewed on:

**Facebook** at

Zion Lutheran Church

**YouTube** at

[www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com)

Search: Zion ELCA Arlington MN

**[www.zionarlington.org](http://www.zionarlington.org)**

**Pastor Gretchen Pierskalla**

952-237-1060

In the office: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday  
Off on Fridays and most Saturdays

By email: [pastor@zionarlington.org](mailto:pastor@zionarlington.org)

By cell: 952-237-1060

including for emergencies anytime (death, hospitalization, etc)

**January 4**

Usher: Deb Stenzel, Starla Schilling  
Mary Lietz, Nancy Mathwig  
Greeter: Cindy Quast  
Acolyte: Murdock Krueger  
Reader: Brenda Danielson  
Altar Guild: Peg Kamps,  
Nancy Mathwig  
Bread Making: Jackie Alsleben  
Parameters: Stacy Haggenmiller

# January 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
				1	2	3

**January 11**

Usher: Wendy Kube, Cindy Quast  
Neil & Lorraine Mielke  
Greeter: Rich & Roseann Nagel  
Acolyte: Grant Schauer  
Reader: Scott Bergs  
Altar Guild: Lorraine Mielke,  
Betty Rud  
Bread Making: Jackie Alsleben  
Parameters: Stacy Haggenmiller

4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<b>Second Sunday of Christmas</b> 9a—Worship w/Holy Communion 10a—Sunday School			4-5:30p—6th, 7th & 8th Grade Confirmation 6:30-8p—9th Grade Confirmation	6:30p—Committee Night 10a—Adult Bible Study		
1 1	1 2	1 3	1 4	1 5	1 6	1 7
<b>Baptism of Our Lord</b> 9a—Worship w/Holy Communion 10a—ANNUAL MEETING 10a—Sunday School			7p—Church Council	10a—Adult Bible Study 11a—Prayer Shawl		

**January 18**

Usher: Rich Nagel, Nick Schiroy  
Larry & Pam Schiroy  
Greeter: Lyle & Betty Rud  
Acolyte: Jacqueline Christeson  
Reader: Bruce Kallhoff  
Parameters: Stacy Haggenmiller

1 8	1 9	2 0	2 1	2 2	2 3	2 4
<b>Second Sunday after Epiphany</b> 9a—Worship 10a—Sunday School		9a—Quilting	4-5:30p—6th, 7th & 8th Grade Confirmation 6:30-8p—9th Grade Confirmation	9a—Quilting 10a—Adult Bible Study 6p—Combined ZCW Potluck		
1 8	1 9	2 0	2 1	2 2	2 3	2 4
<b>Second Sunday after Epiphany</b> 9a—Worship 10a—Sunday School		9a—Quilting	4-5:30p—6th, 7th & 8th Grade Confirmation 6:30-8p—9th Grade Confirmation	9a—Quilting 10a—Adult Bible Study		

**January 25**

Usher: Mark & Lisa Strobel  
Gordon & Barb Bergs  
Greeter: Deb Stenzel  
Acolyte: Harper Drexler  
Reader: Peg Kamps  
Parameters: Stacy Haggenmiller

2 5	2 6	2 7	2 8	2 9	3 0	3 1
<b>Third Sunday after Epiphany</b> 9a—Worship 10a—Sunday School		9a—Quilting	4-5:30p—6th, 7th & 8th Grade Confirmation 6:30-8p—9th Grade Confirmation	9a—Quilting 10a—Adult Bible Study		
2 5	2 6	2 7	2 8	2 9	3 0	3 1
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