



ZION COMMUNITY CHURCH

THE VOICE OF ZION

December 2024

SERMON TITLES & SCRIPTURE READINGS

December 1 Pastor Nate
"Gifts of Good Cheer"
"HOPE"
Matthew 1:18-25

December 8 Pastor Nate
"Gifts of Good Cheer"
"PEACE"
Ephesians 2:12-16

December 15 Pastor Jan
"Got Joy?"
"JOY"
Psalm 98

December 22 Pastor Nate
"Gifts of Good Cheer"
"LOVE"
1 John 4:7-12

December 24 Christmas Eve Service
"Gifts of Good Cheer"
"CHRIST"
Luke 2:13-20

December 29 PANCAKE BREAKFAST



BIBLE READINGS

December 1 1 John 1-3, Deuteronomy 20-22,
Nehemiah 1-4, Psalms 137-139,
Ecclesiastes 11-12, Malachi,
Acts 19-20

December 8 1 John 4-5, Deuteronomy 23-25,
Nehemiah 5-9, Psalms 140-142,
Song 1-2, Revelation 1-6,
Acts 21-22

December 15 11 John, Deuteronomy 26-28,
Nehemiah 10-13, Psalms 143-145,
Song 3-4, Revelation 7-11,
Acts 23-24

December 22 III John, Deuteronomy 29-31,
Esther 1-5, Psalms 146-148,
Song 5-6, Revelation 12-17,
Acts 25-26

December 29 Jude, Deuteronomy 32-34,
Esther 6-10, Psalms 149-150,
Psalms 149-150, Song 7-8,
Revelation 18-22, Acts 27-28



Please have your articles for the Voice into the office by **December 19** for the **January 2025 Voice!**

DECEMBER—LEADERSHIP TEAM MEETING
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 3 @1:00 P.M.

FROM THE PASTOR'S DESK

"Christmas time is here. Happiness and cheer.

Fun for all that children call, Their favorite time of the year."

From a Charlie Brown Christmas

May we never lose the happiness and cheer. May we never grow out of the childlike spirit of it being the favorite time of year. And if you have grown out of it and lost that childlike spirit, may you recover it this Christmas season.

What does Christmas signify? To a degree, it's the standard things. It's "the holidays," which can be code for STRESSFUL! It's the decorating, baking, shopping, parties, extended family gatherings, exchanging gifts, the bad weather, how early it gets so dark, and just the overall general busyness between Thanksgiving and New Year's...it all adds up quickly. It can be easy for us to get lost in what the season is about.

And don't worry, this isn't yet another "so you better remember the reason for the season or else!" post. If you're reading this, I'm 100% sure you know it's about Jesus birth.

We are on the precipice of the madness. Christmas commercials are already playing, people are decorating their yards and houses, and people are starting to buy presents. None of that is bad. But think of it like a church service. When do you get the most out of a church service? Is it when you are going 35mph in a 25mph zone because you're running late, you walk in 5 minutes after the service has started, and by the time you catch your breath from hurrying to get to church, the preacher is already in their 2nd point. We've all been there at one time or another...but we can all agree that you're not getting the most out of that church service.

Compare that to when you wake up in the morning, you spend 15 minutes reading scripture, then spend another 10 minutes in prayer. While getting dressed and eating breakfast, you have worship music playing. You arrive at church early to join the 830am prayer meeting for 30 minutes, and then greet and fellowship with people as they walk in the doors of the church. You're in your seat 5 minutes before the service starts, and when it starts, you're fully engaged because you've spent the whole morning getting ready for worship with your family in Christ.

It's the same with the Christmas season. Spend a few minutes this week and next reading the Christmas story in **Matthew 1:18-2:23** and **Luke 1:26-2:40**. Consider it.

Read through the verses in Isaiah that talk about Jesus.

Isaiah 40:3-5: The announcement of Jesus' coming.

Isaiah 7:14: The virgin birth of Jesus.

Isaiah 61:1: The proclamation of the good news

Isaiah 52:13-53:12: The sacrificial death of Jesus

Isaiah 60:2-3: Jesus' return to claim His own

Take a few moments before the craziness that is the season of Holidays and prepare your heart. Get it ready so that you get the most out of this time.

Christmas Blessings,

Nate

Black Sheep...

This is how the birth of Jesus the Messiah came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be pregnant through the Holy Spirit. Because Joseph, her husband, was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly. But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:18-21, NIV).

Almost every family has black sheep. A rebel who can't seem to toe the line, another is making news because of an embarrassing antic. They are the ones in the family picture that others step away from so they are not closely affiliated.

Jesus had black sheep in His family. When we read through Jesus' genealogy in Matthew 1, we find prostitutes, adulterers, murderers, idol worshipers, and every other sort of black sheep. Not the kind of pedigree we might expect for the Savior of the world.

And then there's Mary. Mary is found to be with child before marriage—a stigma in their society. We know how that news landed on her fiancé Joseph. He was embarrassed. He knew he wasn't the father. He had in mind to leave her "quietly."

In His sovereignty, God cleared up the matter for Joseph in a dream, but what about the rest of Mary's family? Her closest friends? Her community? It's likely that Jesus walked under a cloud of shame all His life because some could never accept such a fantastical story as a virgin conception. In their minds, Mary, and Jesus Himself, would always be black sheep.

God is apparently perfectly OK with that. In fact, black sheep are exactly the sort of people Jesus came for: *"you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21, ESV).*

Jesus really had no other option than to come through a family tree with broken branches, a family tree like yours and mine. Every one of us is a black sheep. But I say, thank God for the perfect Lamb who came to save black sheep like you and me.

Let us pray together.

"Jesus, thank You for coming as the perfect Lamb to save black sheep like me – wash me with Your precious blood and make me white as snow. Amen."

"Are you ready for Christmas?" We hear that question asked a lot during the month of December. It can certainly raise panic in our hearts, but amid all the responsibilities and expectations of the season, may we take time for the most important thing: the preparation of our hearts. I invite you to be sure to pick up one of the Advent devotionals, *"Embracing the Gift of God's Grace,"* located on the Welcome Center and then allow it to help you get truly ready--spiritually ready--to celebrate our Savior's birth.

In His Grip,

Pastor Jan

Greetings Friends!

Night falls quickly on us these late fall days! I find the weight of my coffee and its warmth a comfort come early morn. The heat kicks in, and I am grateful for a snug hearth and home. "All is safely gathered in, let the winter storms begin." ("Come Ye Thankful People Come", Henry Alford). I remember as a child learning this hymn in grade school. I remember, as well, a big billboard of a large tree in each classroom, each leaf printed with a reason to be grateful. A season of gratitude for all that God has given.

"All that God has given." A statement I stand in thunderous silence and ponder. I say thunderous because so many beautiful and wondrous blessings come to mind, all wanting to be first. I know I could never count them all. It is easy to be grateful when life is going easy. I know my God has heard my heart cry out in jubilation when all was well. I bow my head in praise, and I thank the Lord for the times when all wasn't well. When my heart was breaking He was there. When I was lost, looking for a way out, a way up, a way home, He was there. When I didn't have an address, He was my "in care of". Thank you Lord. Thank you for the knowledge, the right to know as Your child, that You will never leave me. He will never leave us. God is so good. It is a season to remember, a time to be still, and know.

In its own way, Fall can come and go so quickly. A transition from summer to winter at their most extreme. There are preparations to be made for Thanksgiving. Christmas will come quickly at its heels. Family plans and parties. Time marches onward. Grab your coffee in the early morn. Feel the weight and the comfort of its warmth. Take that moment, before the tasks of the day are set to motion and let your heart sing a hymn of Thanksgiving. God hears his people. Amid the clamor of our needs, sing loud the praises for His unending love. Take in the knowledge that He will always be our "in care of". It is a season to remember. Be still....and know.

Yours in Christ

Kate

"Moments Captured In Time at Zion"



CELEBRATING DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS AND ANIVERSARIES

- 3. Nate Cravillion
- 6. Tommie Schultz
- 7. Brianna Onsager
- 12. Nancy Krause
- 14. Jackie Bodden
- 16. Sebastian Langjahr
- 18. Mike Ziaya
- 28. Linda Roehrborn



LET'S PRAY TOGETHER

PLEASE JOIN US FOR PRAYER ON SUNDAY MORNINGS AT 8:30 A.M.

IN THE FELLOWSHIP HALL



PRAYER TIME FOR ALL WOMEN—TUESDAY, DECEMBER , 1: 00 PM Sandy Neumann will open her home on the first and third Tuesday of each month. We will be gathering to pray for whatever God has put on our hearts and minds. Pray for strength in these troubling times and anything that God may lead us pray for!



Christmas is a lovely time of the year to celebrate Jesus' birth and remember our loved ones. If you would like to bring in a poinsettia or flowers in memory or honor of someone to decorate our altar for Christmas, please bring your plants to church December 18-20. Thank you!



SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7 @9:00 A.M.—WOMEN OF ZION (WOZ) The event will include: a breakfast and dessert, an easy Christmas craft (all supplies will be provided), Christmas games. Please sign up, in order for Leslie to purchase the supplies that will be needed.



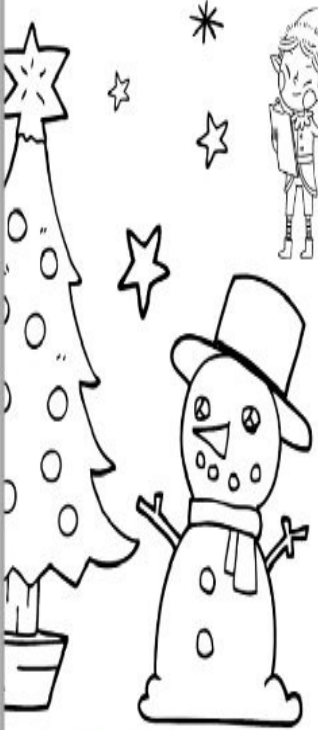
SUNDAY, DECEMBER 15, 10:30 A.M.—PIZZA & ELEPHANTS! Pizza will be provided, you may bring a dessert if you wish. Please bring an unwanted item or an item you would like to regift. Please wrap your gift or put your item in a gift bag. Let's have some fun!

*Pancake
Breakfast*

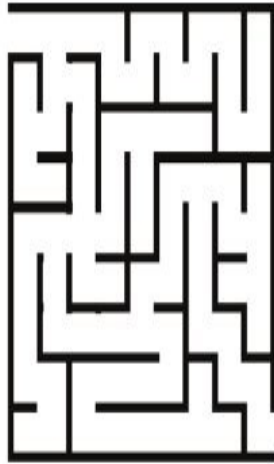


SUNDAY, DECEMBER 29, 9:30 A.M.—PANCAKE BREAKFAST AND A SHORT DEVOTIONAL!





Help the elf find the missing gift.



lyojl
osrtyf
lehisg
lselb
dnayc
natsa
oyj
okoecis
soty

Can you unscramble these words?

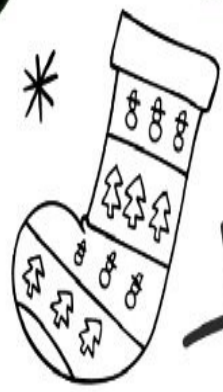
Rudolph is hungry... Help him get to his carrots!



MERRY Christmas



HO HO HO



Find these words!



Tic-Tac-Toe

S	Z	F	W	R	C	F	J	S
E	N	X	Y	U	A	E	O	A
A	C	O	A	D	N	L	D	N
L	O	G	W	O	D	F	W	T
I	C	I	J	L	Y	G	R	A
G	O	F	T	P	C	A	E	X
H	A	T	J	H	A	H	A	C
T	B	S	Z	B	N	V	T	F
S	M	X	Y	T	E	Z	H	K

RUDOLPH
SANTA
WREATH
LIGHTS
COCOA

GIFTS
ELF
CANDYCANE
SNOW

