

December Newsletter

# From Pastor's desk...

December 2023

Dear Fellow-Redeemed and Dear Friends,

Well, we knew the day would come, and on the last day of this month, the day of my retirement from the parish ministry will become part of Zion's history.

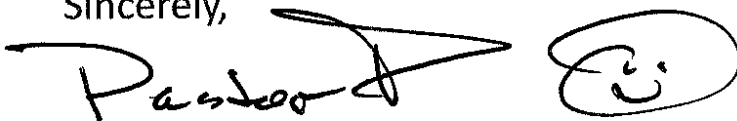
Please don't contribute to the so-called "Cult of Personality" that often surrounds a well-received Pastor's tenure of service by declaring it to be a sad day. Rejoice with me that we had these wonderful years together, celebrating the joys as well as the sorrows, the defeats as well as many more victories.

Pastor Robert Kuhn once told me as I was praying about the call to come to Zion back in 1997, that for him and his dear wife, the "honeymoon never ended." I feel somewhat the same. We came and were well received. We served and were well supported. And we did what God had called us to do here. And for that, I am forever grateful.

So, celebrate with us and pray for this next chapter in our lives! I may not be your Pastor after December 31, 2023, but I will always be your friend!

God Bless you in this time of change!

Sincerely,

The signature consists of two parts. The first part is a stylized, cursive signature that appears to read "Pastor" followed by a large, sweeping flourish. The second part is a simple, circular doodle containing a smiley face.

Rev. Don Pritchard, Fellow Sinner and Fellow Redeemed!



# December News

## Retirement Potluck

Pastor Pritchard's Retirement potluck will be held on December 17 immediately following the Divine Service. Meat and dessert will be provided, side dishes are welcome. A sign up sheet is posted.

\*\*\*\*\*

## Final Service

Pastor's final service as the shepherd of our faith family will be on December 31.

& & & & & & & & & &

## Midweek Advent Services/Suppers

Midweek Advent services and suppers will be held on Wednesday evenings, beginning on December 6. Light suppers beginning at 5:30 P.M. will be provided by:

John and Debbie Edie (12/6)

Stephanie Goebel & Bill LaMarca (12/13)

Sue Matzat (12/20).

Services will begin at 6:30 P.M. Invite your family and friends to join us!

#####

## 2024 Offering Envelopes

2024 Offering Envelope packets will be available in early December. Members who submit their tithes/offerings via ACH or electronic checks will not be assigned a packet. ACH and electronic checks are an acceptable method of making sure your offerings and tithes are received even when you aren't able to attend services.

## Pictorial/Membership Directory Pictures

The Pictorial/Membership Committee is still seeking pictures to be included in our 2024 combined directory. Informal pictures will be taken following the Divine Services on December 3, 10 & 17. If you have a picture that you would like used in the directory, email it to: [zionpp@casscomm.com](mailto:zionpp@casscomm.com) AND [Linshull2002@yahoo.com](mailto:Linshull2002@yahoo.com) no later than December 20.

^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^^

## Installation of Officers

Installation of newly elected and returning officers will be held during the Divine Service on December 31. All officers should plan to attend.

!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

## Decorate the Church

Volunteers are needed to assist the Trustees in decorating the church for Advent and Christmas. Date is Saturday, December 9, beginning at 9:00 A.M. All help is appreciated!!



## **From our Chairman....**

December 31, 2023 marks the end of an era at Zion Lutheran Church in Pleasant Plains. Pastor Don Pritchard officially announced his retirement beginning January 1, 2024.

In 1997 Pastor accepted a call to Zion to proclaim the Gospel and be our shepherd. For over twenty-six years we have called him Pastor, and friend to many. His time is quickly coming to a close at Zion. We take a minute and thank Pastor for the many years of service to our faith family. Zion has been blessed with Pastor's Confessional Teachings of Word and Sacraments.

We also thank Cindy Pritchard, his wife, for the many years of service to Zion as Parish Nurse, and most recently, delivering the children's message each week. We wish you both well. You will forever be in our hearts, and we will keep this new chapter of your life in our prayers.

The Stewardship and Outreach committee have planned a celebration potluck at Zion immediately following church service December 17, to commemorate Pastor and Cindy. Please plan on joining us.

Where do we go from here? A Call Committee has been established consisting of six members of Zion, three men and three women. The committee will be working closely with Circuit Counselor, Pastor Matt Schnieder, and District President, Rev. Michael Mohr, in providing the names of future candidates. This process could be lengthy and tedious.

Please keep Zion in your prayers during this new, yet exciting time. With God leading our faith family, in the end, Lord willing, Zion will once again be blessed with a new Pastor to continue to administer Word and Sacraments.

Blessings Everyone!

Congregational Chairman  
Gary Klekamp



## **Pastor Pritchard's Retirement Party**

**When:** December 17 immediately following the Divine Service

**Where:** Parish Hall, Zion Lutheran Church

**What:** Potluck – Meat and dessert will be provided. A sign up sheet is posted for side dishes.

Please plan to join us as we say **“THANK YOU”** to Pastor Pritchard for leading our Faith Family for over 25 years and wish him well in retirement!





## Remembering our Home Bound Members.....

Several members of our faith family are home bound or just can't get around as well as they used to. Names and addresses of our members who receive Pastoral visits or mailings are below. Please keep them in your prayers. Also, with Christmas fast approaching, sending a note or card would let them know they are not forgotten by their faith family. When you sign your card, include "Zion Lutheran Church" below your name to help give them a reference. Thanks for sharing Christ's love with our fellow members.

Pastor & Mrs. Edward Balfour  
150 Mitchell Road  
Cape Elizabeth, ME 04107

Joann DeCroix  
4817 N. Oak Hill Rd., Apt. 402  
Rochester, IL 62563

Fred & Shirley Hagen  
620 Grandview Dr.  
Pleasant Plains, IL 62677

Barb Hand  
2601 Montvale Dr., Apt. 315  
Springfield, IL 62704

Nancie Klein  
3401 Hedley, Apt. 7  
Springfield, IL 62711

Robin Krone  
3645 Richland Elevator Road  
Pleasant Plains, IL 62677

Ted Mahler  
Prairie Rose Health Care Center  
900 S. Chestnut St  
Pana, IL 62557

Darrell & Shirley Patrick  
104 W. Main St., P.O. Box 42  
Pleasant Plains, IL 62677

Merle Theilen  
The Regency  
2120 W. Washington, #206  
Springfield, IL 62704

Evelyn Thomas  
4101 West Iles Ave., Apt. 3325  
Springfield, IL 62711





November 2023

As Joseph pondered what to do after the shocking news that Mary was pregnant, an angel of the Lord came to him with a special message: “Do not fear to take Mary as your wife, for that which is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:20–21).

*This* is the Christmas message: Christ was born to save us from our sins.

In the coming months, as the holiday messages of our culture collide with the message of the church, we have the joyous task of proclaiming this true Gospel to those around us. Consumerism, vague wishes of “holiday spirit” and platitudes about “peace” may abound, but one lasting truth cuts through: **Jesus Christ was born, and He was born to save us.**

The secular observance of Christmas is a strange phenomenon. For most of the year, our culture largely ignores the church except to mock or attack it. While we who are in the church observe the seasons of the Church Year, the world takes no notice.

Then, starting some time in November, the mainstream culture claims one of the church’s most holy days as its own by way of so-called “Christmas” music on the radio, specials and commercials on TV, merchandise in stores, and billboards and decorations in city centers. Understandably, Christians are often critical of these “holiday” celebrations, which remove any substantive references to the true “reason for the season.”

It is true that our culture’s celebration of Christmas is vapid. However, we can also see in it something that should encourage us and spur on our witness: the desperate desire of those around us for something external to shape their lives — to grant meaning, liturgy and community.

People want a season of lights, love and joy because they are desperately seeking the one true source of light, love and joy. Yet we who are in Christ know that, outside of Him, all of these things are only passing shadows. Articles come out each year in early January about beating “post-holiday depression.” Without Christ, the joy of the secular season passes like the shadow it is.

What we have, dear brothers and sisters, is the truth — the truth that, on that first Christmas, “the true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world” (John 1:9).

What we celebrate on Christmas and all year long is the God of the universe born as a human baby, born to live a perfect life and then to die on a cross and rise triumphantly from the grave for the sins of all mankind. What we celebrate is our salvation through this Christ, by His grace alone. What we celebrate is peace with God, made through this baby born in Bethlehem.

This is the light of the Gospel. It is a light that does not go out. It is a peace that passes all understanding, a joy that cannot be taken. This is why we Christians put up trees, decorate with lights, hang stockings and give gifts.

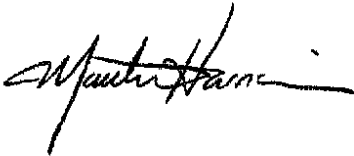
This is the light that together we will continue to share this Christmas season with a desperate world — with people who search in vain because they don't understand what they truly seek.

This is the light our pastors proclaim from their pulpits on Christmas Day and every Sunday morning. This is the light our missionaries carry to all the world. This is the light our seminaries prepare their students to share, the light our chaplains bring to those who serve in our military, and the light our national ministries seek to share across our country — in rural areas and inner cities, among youth, on college campuses, after natural disasters, and in so many other contexts.

**With your generous support of the LCMS and your sharing of the Gospel in your communities, this is the light that you can help us shine into the world.**

As you pray about ways to share the light and truth of Christ this Christmas season, we ask that you prayerfully consider bolstering the work of The Lutheran Church —Missouri Synod as we continue to work ceaselessly to spread these glad tidings of great joy wherever they have not yet been heard. Thank you.

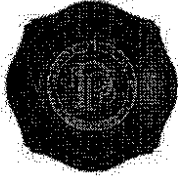
With joy at His birth,



Matthew C. Harrison  
President  
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

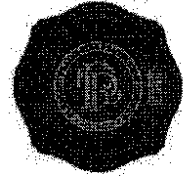
P.S. As this year's Christmas season approaches and you see the secular "holiday" celebrations begin around you, remember that you have the light and the joy that all the celebrators are seeking. The enclosed brochure highlights just a few of the ways in which your generous contributions can help LCMS missionaries and others shine this light around the world. We invite you to consider a contribution to the LCMS this Christmas, enabling us to continue our mission of sharing this good news of the One whose name means "He saves His people from their sins."





## Pleasant Plains Fire Protection District

611 Buckeye Road  
Pleasant Plains, IL 62677  
Phone. 217-626-1131



November 15, 2023

Reverend Donald Pritchard  
Zion Lutheran Church  
525 North Cartwright  
Pleasant Plains, IL 62677

Dear Reverend Pritchard:

Thank you for your invitation to your Zion Lutheran Church's Sunday worship service and Thanksgiving meal. We were honored by your invitation, message, hospitality of the Zion Lutheran Church congregation and the delicious meal.

Thank you for your and other members of your congregation's service to the Pleasant Plains Fire Department and community. We are also grateful for the opportunity to access your church and property during the annual July 4<sup>th</sup> Freedom Celebration. Your support and hospitality does not go unnoticed by our fire department and others in the community.

Thank you!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Keith Milliman".

Keith Milliman  
Chief  
Pleasant Plains Fire Protection District

| <b>Zion Lutheran Church</b>         |  |   |
|-------------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>Stewardship Report</b>           |  |   |
| <b>Offerings Compared to Budget</b> |  |   |
|                                     | <b>Offerings<br/>Received<br/>10-Months<br/>ending</b> | <b>Budgeted<br/>Expenses<br/>10-Months<br/>ending</b> |
|                                     | <b>October 31, 2023</b>                                | <b>October 31, 2023</b>                               |
| <b>General Operating</b>            | <b>\$104,685</b>                                       | <b>\$128,792</b>                                      |
| <b>Synod Support &amp; Missions</b> | <b>\$7,915</b>   | <b>\$19,167</b>                                       |
| <b>Building Fund</b>                | \$ -   | Not budgeted-repairs/replacement approved by Voters   |
| <b>Oschwald Scholarship</b>         | \$ -   | Not budgeted - per generosity of membership           |
| <b>Free Will</b>                    | \$ -   | Not budgeted - earmarked when collected               |

\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$\$

**Offerings/Tithes via ACH or electronic checks....** Did you know that you can submit your offerings/tithes via ACH or electronic checks? If you use online banking, simply add Zion Lutheran Church to your payees list. Or, you can arrange with your financial institution to automatically send your offerings/tithes to Zion's bank accounts. The funds deposited into Zion's account are easily identified by the Financial Secretary. You can even designate your e-funds to the General Fund, Building Fund, etc., just let Eric Oswald know your preference. Any questions, see Eric.

# DECEMBER



## Birthday's

|                   |       |
|-------------------|-------|
| Ann Oswald        | 12/10 |
| Evan Manker       | 12/11 |
| Isaac Rennecker   | 12/13 |
| Nora Savage       | 12/15 |
| Andrew Gleason    | 12/16 |
| Sarah Bloch       | 12/17 |
| JoAnne Neathery   | 12/17 |
| Shannon Rennecker | 12/17 |
| Diego White       | 12/17 |
| Jennifer Darnell  | 12/19 |
| Tristen Tewes     | 12/20 |
| Laura Hecht       | 12/24 |
| Cindy Pritchard   | 12/24 |
| Mary Bernoteit    | 12/27 |
| Dawson Wieland    | 12/27 |

## Baptism Birthday

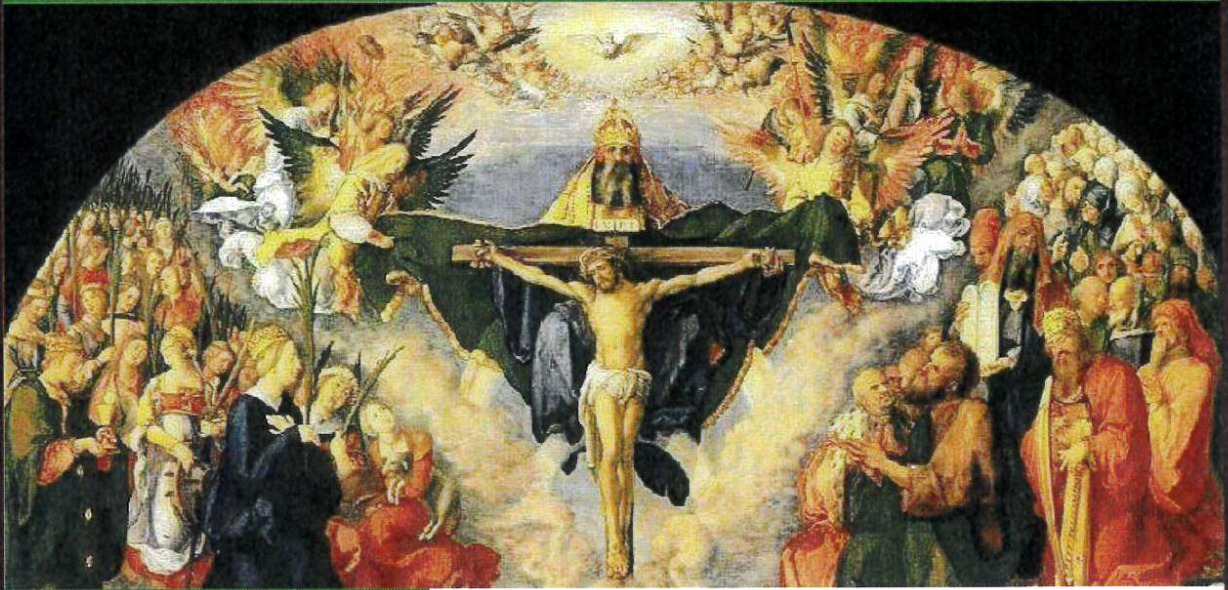
|                     |       |
|---------------------|-------|
| Darrel Patrick      | 12/1  |
| Debbie Edie         | 12/2  |
| Jacob Hermes        | 12/2  |
| Aiden Chipol        | 12/4  |
| Steve Jurgens       | 12/4  |
| Ben Pritchard       | 12/5  |
| Chris Carter        | 12/12 |
| Norman Stremsterfer | 12/13 |
| Ann Oswald          | 12/15 |
| Dave White          | 12/15 |
| Robison Carter      | 12/17 |
| Sue Matzat          | 12/18 |
| Andrew Gleason      | 12/26 |



## Wedding Anniversary

|                    |       |
|--------------------|-------|
| John & Debbie Edie | 12/23 |
|--------------------|-------|





## Psalm 98

Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him. The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations. He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music; make music to the LORD with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing, with trumpets and the blast of the

## Beyond What Is Felt

Dorcas, Lydia, and Phoebe, Faithful Women  
25 October 2023

Being wrapped up in our own feelings breaks the first commandment. When our focus is on ourselves, it cannot be on God. Self is always the idol closest to hand. The Word of God turns us away from ourselves and toward the God who has defeated all our enemies, especially those within, in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The whole picture changes when we give up ourselves in favor of God. There is nothing but defeat within. The old Adam is a continual plague to us, dragging us into the morass of our own sin and weakness. He is a continual witness to our depravity howling in satanic verses. The irony is that this internal witness is the truth. Old Adam, Satan, and the world all are telling us our own sin and rightly. They just have wrong what our sin means. They claim again and again that our sin means our damnation. Sinners we are. Damned we are not for Christ's sake.



ram's horn-- shout for joy before the LORD, the King. Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy; let them sing before the LORD, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity. (ESV)

Modern thought rejects God partly because we cannot get beyond the idolatry that focuses on the self. There is nothing beyond me, my experience, my feelings, my satisfaction or my dissatisfaction. Truth is not part of the equation, merely how I feel about things. When you make me feel badly, you are offending me. I don't particularly care to ask myself if you are telling me the truth, I just harrumph indignantly. Politicians have made themselves immune from substantive criticism by pleading that they are offended by it. There is a cottage industry in taking offense these days because feelings are our most precious god. The army of the offended march to the tyrannous drumbeat of their feelings.

Many in our fallen age have so focused on themselves that they feel alive only when they are experiencing the most intense feelings; whether it be pain or joy, suffering or exhilaration. This occasionally exhibits itself in the way that some fall into the desire to hurt themselves merely to feel alive. May God rescue us all from this self-centered bent. For that way lies death and damnation. The only way truly to live is to give up focus on self and live in Christ alone through His Word. The Word of God gives far beyond what is felt. Christ felt the sentence of death within Himself, but believed only the promise of God that the holy One would not see decay. Believing trumps feeling, no matter what you feel.

We who are in Christ Jesus believe that our sin is on Him. Oh, it's our sin alright, that we feel and experience in our hearts. But He has taken it away from us. No matter what we feel within ourselves a new Word is spoken over us. It comes from outside of us. It depends on God and not us. It tells us who we really are in Christ Jesus. Such a divinely wrought work cannot find confirmation within us. It cannot arise out of our own depraved hearts. We have a Word of God that quite goes beyond our feelings and tells us a new song of mercy from the God who is greater than our hearts (1Jn 3:19-20). If we find ourselves



wallowing in the feeling that we are sinful, damned, and hopeless we are capitulating to God's enemies and denying that God has changed the meaning of our sin by putting it upon the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29). So what are you going to believe? Your own heart? Or God's Word?

Rev. Dr. Scott R.  
Murray  
Memorial Lutheran  
Church



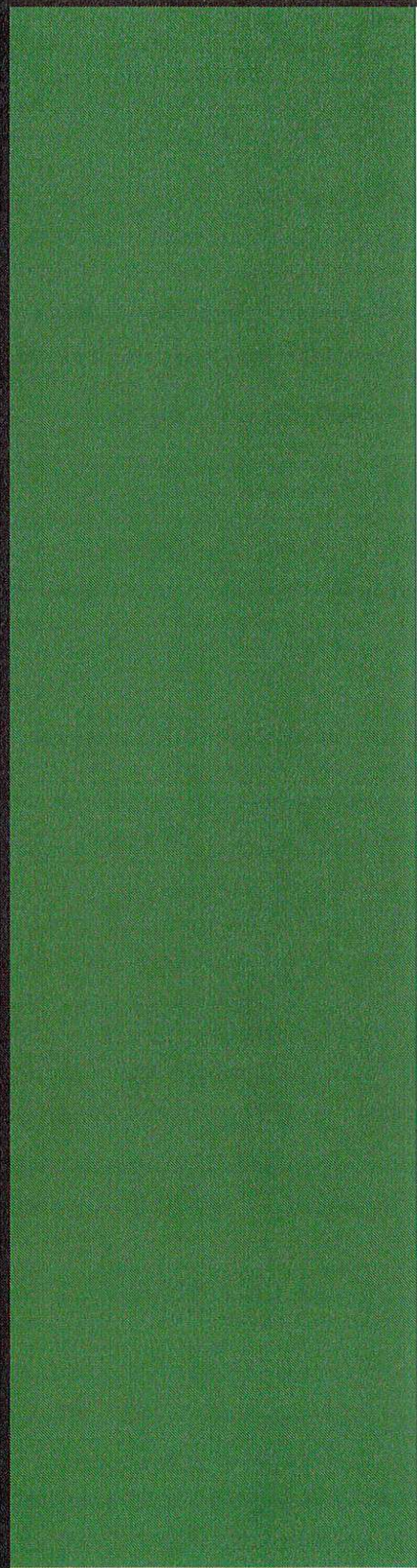
---

## Martin Luther

“The wisdom of faith renders the wisdom of the world, which regards this a stupid message, foolishness. The world's wisdom gives itself great airs and says: ‘Well, all the gospel can talk about is that we are to be lords over death, sin, and all things; and yet we observe only the opposite in us and the whole world, namely, that death, sin, and devil prevail, and not life.’ Worldly wisdom is based and founded on such observations. It says: ‘Preach as you may and say what you will, but I see things differently.’ Therefore, these two facts must stand side by side, that we are lords over devil and death and that we at the same time lie prostrate at their feet. The one must be believed, the other is felt. The devil must be lord over the world and whatever is part of it. He holds us with all his might. He is far stronger than we are. For we are his guests, residing as strangers in an inn. Therefore, whatever dwells in us, in our flesh and blood, of the world and this life must be subject to the devil, enabling him to deal with us as he wishes.

“Now you will say: ‘What are you preaching and what, after all, do you believe? Since you yourself





confess that we do not feel or perceive this, your message is necessarily vain and a mere dream. For if there were some basis to your message, this would have to be demonstrated also by experience.' I reply: 'That is exactly what I am saying, namely, that we must first believe contrary to our experience what cannot be believed humanly, and that we must feel what we do not feel.' Accordingly, in the very thing in which the devil, with respect to feeling, is my lord, he must be my servant. And when I lie prostrate and the whole world lies on top of me, I am still lying on top. How is that? If it is to be true, you say, experience must come along, and this must be perceived. You are right; however, perception must follow later, and faith must precede it, working without and beyond perception.

"Thus my conscience must, as it feels sin and as it fears and trembles, become lord and victor over sin; not through feeling and thinking but through faith in the Word. And thereby it is comforted and sustained against and over sin until sin is banished entirely and is no longer felt. Thus death, too, lies prostrate under us, so that it cannot devour or hold us. And yet it attaches itself to our neck with pestilence, sword, and all sorts of troubles and hurls us under itself into the grave, where we have to rot. And yet we do not remain there permanently but break away and come forth more gloriously than the heaven with sun and stars. That is what Christ also experienced. When He died and was buried, there was no perception or expectation of life. And it was so very hard for the disciples to believe that the Christ lying in the grave behind a sealed rock was the Lord over death and grave. They themselves said: 'We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel' ([Lk 24:21](#))."

**Martin Luther, *Commentary on 1 Corinthians***

---



## Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, You offered Yourself into suffering and death, that we might see that suffering and death brings the world the greatest good. Help us to see our suffering in the light of Your own, that we might confess Your goodness and grace when called to account for the hope that is in us. Amen.

For persecuted Christians, that they might confess God's faithfulness in the midst of suffering

For the family of Bob and Karen Steenwyk, who were called into the eternal kingdom of Christ, that those who mourn would be comforted by the promises of God

For President Matthew Harrison and the District Presidents of the LCMS, that the Lord Jesus would continue to grant him the strength to carry out the duties of his office

For Pastor-elect Keith Emshoff, that he would be sustained in the days leading up to his ordination and installation

---

Art: DÜRER, Albrecht *The Adoration of the Trinity* (1511)

---



[Share This Email](#)



[Share This Email](#)



[Share This Email](#)

---

[Contact Us](#)



[Visit Our Website](#)

# December

| Sunday   | Monday  | Tuesday                                    | Wednesday  | Thursday                    | Friday | Saturday  |
|--|---|--|--|-----------------------------|--------|---|
| 26   | 27  | 28   | 29   | 30                          | 1      | 2   |
| 3  | 4   | 5  | 6  | 7                           | 8      | 9   |
| Sunday School & Adult Bible Study 9:00 A.M.<br>Divine Service 10:15 A.M.<br>Pictorial/Membership Directory pictures following service<br>Confirmation Class 6:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.  | Call Committee<br>6:30 P.M.   | Circuit Pastor's at<br>St. John's, Chatham | Mid-Week Advent<br>Service/Supper<br>Supper 5:30 P.M.<br>Service 6:30 P.M.                                   |                             |        | Decorate the<br>Church 9:00 A.M.  |
| 10   | 11  | 12   | 13   | 14                          | 15     | 16  |
| Sunday School & Adult Bible Study 9:00 A.M.<br>Divine Service with Communion 10:15 A.M.<br>Pictorial/Membership Directory pictures following service<br>Confirmation Class 6:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M.                           |   |  | Mary Martha Guild<br>2:00 P.M.<br>Mid-Week Advent<br>Service/Supper<br>Supper 5:30 P.M.<br>Service 6:30 P.M. |                             |        |   |
| 17   | 18  | 19   | 20   | 21                          | 22     | 23  |
| Sunday School & Adult Bible Study 9:00 A.M.<br>Divine Service 10:15 A.M.<br>Pastor Pritchard's Retirement Potluck<br>Pictorial/Membership Directory pictures following service<br>Confirmation Class 6:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M. |   |  | Mid-Week Advent<br>Service/Supper<br>Supper 5:30 P.M.<br>Service 6:30 P.M.                                   | Elders 5:30 P.M.            |        |   |
| 24   | 25  | 26   | 27   | 28                          | 29     | 30  |
| Sunday School & Adult Bible Study 9:00 A.M.<br>Divine Service with Communion 10:15 A.M.<br>Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 6:30 P.M.   |  |  | January Newsletter<br>Articles/Announcements<br>Due  | Church Council<br>6:30 P.M. |        |  |
| 31   | 1   | Notes Elder : Bill LaMarca                 |  |                             |        |   |
| Sunday School & Adult Bible Study 9:00 A.M.<br>Divine Service with Communion 10:15 A.M.<br>Installation of Officers<br>Pastor Pritchard's final Service  |   |  |  |                             |        |   |



**Zion's Newsletter**  
**December, 2023**

**Zion Lutheran Church**  
**Rev. Don Pritchard**  
**525 North Cartwright**  
**P.O. Box 167**  
**Pleasant Plains, IL 62677**

**(217) 626-1282**



**Sunday School 9:00 A.M.**  
**Adult Bible Study 9:00 A.M.**  
**Divine Service 10:15 A.M.**

**LCMS**

**Email: [zionpp@casscomm.com](mailto:zionpp@casscomm.com)**  
**Website: [www.zionpp.net](http://www.zionpp.net)**