

# *The Glory of Zion*

*Christ's Light Shining Among Us*

Newsletter of **Zion Lutheran Church, School & Preschool**

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February 2026

## ***In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. – 1 John 4:9***

We are about to be inundated with pink hearts and sweet treats. The feeling of love will be in the air as Hallmark's Valentine's Day celebration descends on us once again. Zion's elementary school classes will have their Valentine's Day parties, the restaurants will be filled with reservations, and florists will celebrate their own "most wonderful time of the year."

All this is to say, Valentine's Day isn't bad. Our world could use more love. Lots more of it! Just not the over-hyped, sappy, sentimental kind.

The world needs more love, that's for sure. It needs the kind of love found in 1 John 4. For "God is love." And the world needs more God.

What does it mean that "God is love?" How is that love different than candied-heart Valentine's-Day love? Jesus tells us when He says, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13).

That's exactly what Jesus did. He was born to bring us the truth of God's love. He came to show us that love – real love – is about sacrifice. It's about whole-heartedly giving yourself to another. It's about hanging on a cross while the very people You came to love mock and ridicule You.

Real love, God's love, patiently bore all the sin of the world. God's love didn't try to get out of a toxic relationship with us because we rejected Him. He loved us all the more. He didn't rejoice in the wrongdoings of Adam, which made God's creation return to the dust which they came. In a sure and certain hope, He came to lay down His life in order to love, to save, you.

This Lenten season, join us to receive God's very real and very tangible love through His Sacramental gifts. Hold Christ's body in your hand. Drink in His forgiveness which fills the wine. Remember and revel in your baptism. Hear the words of His absolution. Feel the cross of ash on your forehead, marking you as one redeemed by Christ the crucified.

That's the love that this world needs. That's that love that you and I can't live without. That's the love of God.

In the Love of Christ,

Pastor Bryan Meadows



## **MINISTRY FOCUS: Make a Joyful Noise: A Chat with the Chapel Pianists**

*By Peggy Hettick*

Zion's weekly chapel this year has been centered on the National Lutheran Schools' theme, "Let's Make a Joyful Noise," and a special theme for January, "Praise the Lord – the Kings of Kings." Who better to help make that Joyful Noise and to help the kids "Praise the Lord" than the chapel pianists!

Those chapel pianists are: Pat Jessen, a longtime member of Zion, church organist and pianist for pre-school/kindergarten Sunday School; Carol Long, former 5th grade teacher at Zion; and Darcy Oltmanns, who is Zion principal Ann Solinsky's mom.

All 3 pianists began to play the piano at a relatively young age. Pat took piano lessons as a young girl from Gertrude Naiman, a former organist at Zion. Pat continued lessons in college and then used her skills as a pianist and organist throughout her career as a teacher and as an accompanist in church. Carol Long similarly used her talents in music in many ways throughout her many years of teaching.

Darcy Oltmanns received the gift of piano lessons on her 8th birthday. Darcy's career in nursing and raising kids kept her busy and playing the piano took a backseat until some 30 years later, when her husband thoughtfully volunteered her services as a pianist for Sunday morning church services.

Together, these three accompanists have a combined total of more than one hundred years of experience in playing and providing music. They faithfully give of their time and talents, showing up for Wednesday morning for chapel services with willing hearts.



*Darcy Oltmanns playing piano during chapel on Wednesday.*

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## **STEWARDSHIP MINUTE: A Thankful Heart**

*By Kevin Aker*

Today, let's think about David. David loved God with all his heart. David had seen good times and hard times. There were days when he faced battles, felt lonely, and had big decisions to make. But through it all, David discovered a beautiful truth: God's love never ends. Not ever!

David wrote Psalm 136 to help us remember God's never-ending love. He wrote, 'Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good.'

And then, over and over, David included this special line: 'His steadfast love endures forever!'"

David didn't just thank God for things that happen once in a while. He thanked God for EVERYTHING!

For David, every star, every sunrise, every victory, and even every hard moment was a reason to thank God! David remembered how God rescued His people from danger, helped them when they were afraid, and took care of those who loved Him.

This psalm is a wonderful reminder that God's love is there when we wake up, when we're at work or school, and when we're at home. His love never runs out. Even when things seem tough, we can hold onto God's goodness.

But David isn't the only one who talked about thankfulness! The apostle Paul knew what it was like to face challenges, but he also knew God's peace. He wrote in Colossians 3:15: 'Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts... and be thankful.'

Paul's words tell us that thankfulness brings peace. When we choose to remember God's goodness and say thank you, it helps our hearts rest and fills us with joy.

We've reached a milestone here at Zion. After three years, we have reached the end of the first phase of the Christ's Way Capital Campaign. God has blessed us so greatly and today we celebrate that fact! Thank you so much for sharing your time, talents and treasures to help further the ministry of Zion Lutheran Church, School & Preschool. We are so very blessed, so today, just like David and Paul, as a people of Zion, let's look for ways to thank God—for everything around us, for loving us forever, and for giving us deep peace and joy."

Adapted from a lesson by "Glory Kids" [www.childrensministrylessons.com](http://www.childrensministrylessons.com)

## DISCIPLESHIP FOCUS: Small Group Ministry: A Place of Belonging

By Azure Summers

Zion's small group ministry offers a meaningful way to experience a deeper sense of belonging within the church. While our regular worship services bring us together for teaching and worship, small groups create space for connection, conversation, and personal growth. They move faith from rows of seats into circles of relationship!

Typically, small groups are gatherings of a few people—perhaps four or more families—who meet regularly outside of church. Many groups meet in homes, but some meet at coffee shops, church, or even a favorite outdoor location. Anywhere the members can gather for conversation works fine. Some groups gather weekly, others biweekly or monthly, but all share a common purpose: to grow in faith together while building genuine relationships.

**Relationships.** Small groups provide a place where people are known by name, not just face. Over time, members share life experiences, celebrate milestones, and support one another through challenges. In this age of distraction and busyness, that often makes us feel isolated, small groups provide an important sense of belonging.

**Spiritual growth.** Bible studies and faith-focused discussions help us learn what it means to walk with Jesus in our everyday lives. The goal isn't to have all the right answers, but to ask meaningful questions and apply faith to everyday life—work, family, relationships, and personal struggles. Group discussion helps us learn from one another's perspectives and experiences, making faith feel relevant and lived out.

**Care and support.** Small groups naturally become places where the members pray for one another, offer encouragement, and step in during times of need. Whether it's providing meals after a surgery, checking in during a difficult season, or celebrating a new job or birth, small groups help ensure no one walks alone.

At Zion, groups are formed with members from all ages and stages of life. Each group chooses what they would like to study and what materials to use. They choose how often and where they will meet. Some groups meet for weeks, and some stay together for years. Small groups are very much based on what meets the needs of the group. While each group may look different, the goal remains the same: connection, growth, and care.

In a busy and often isolating world, Zion's small groups create intentional space for meaningful connection. They remind people that church is not just a place to attend, but a community to belong to. By gathering consistently, sharing honestly, and growing together, small groups play a vital role in helping faith become personal, practical, and lived out day by day.



One of the Epp's small groups gathers in a home for fellowship, food and game night.

## Life in a Small Group

For Jon and Lynette Epp, small groups have been a source of blessing for 35 years! Their first group met for 11 years before they came to Zion in 2002, where they quickly joined a small group through Zion.

“Our first Zion small group walked with us through the adoption of our daughter Lily. It was so wonderful having their love, support, and prayers. They even hosted a baby shower for us. The week we left to go pick up Lily they laid hands on us and blessed our journey. We will never forget that support.”

Over the years, the Epps have been members of many small groups, some together and some individually, sometimes attending multiple groups at the same time. They have split off their group multiple times to start additional groups, always with the goal of sharing the blessing of small groups with others.

“It was hard to split, but we wanted others to have the special blessing we had all shared. One group we became involved with added a special meal before each study. Eating together brought new meaning to communing together. Real community is established when you enjoy food and fellowship together.

We feel called to follow the words of Hebrews 10:24-25: ‘And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another.’ Because of small groups, our experience of church reaches beyond the walls of a building and into the homes of fellow believers, strengthening each other to ‘love our neighbors.’

Our desire is that every member of Zion would experience the blessings of being in a small group bible study or service group to connect with each other and strengthen our church home!”

## SCHOOL FOCUS: Zion Lutheran Preschool

By Hope Genzlinger

### What is Preschool All About?

Preschool classes at Zion began 26 years ago when the church and school moved to our current location. From that time, hundreds of children have attended preschool classes, many continuing their education through Zion's other grades and some attending Rapid City schools. We offer half day classes for 3-, 4-, and 5-year olds. We strive to give our littlest students a playful preschool experience, all wrapped up in the knowledge and love of Jesus. A few years ago, we added an afternoon pre-kindergarten class as some of our students need more time to mature before starting kindergarten. We also offer part-time and full-time childcare for families whose parents both work outside the home. We love being able to minister and teach these little people and their families at Zion!

### Preschool Enrollment 2026-2027

All Preschool Enrollment begins at 7:00 AM.

March 17: Current Preschool Families can register for next year.

March 19: Zion Church & School Families can register for next year.

March 24: Rapid City Community Members can register for next year.

Contact Mrs. Genzlinger for Preschool questions at [hope.genzlinger@zionrc.org](mailto:hope.genzlinger@zionrc.org) or 605-342-5749.

### Summer Daycare Registration

February 24: Registration opens for Zion families at 7:00 AM.

Contact Miss Riley for SDC questions at [summerdaycare@zionrc.org](mailto:summerdaycare@zionrc.org).

### Mrs. G's Morning 4 & 5 Year Old Preschool Class

How do you know that someone loves you?

**Tucker**—Because they told me.

**Samuel**—Hugs.

**Palmer**—By saying they love me.

**Adam**—Hugs and kisses and cuddles.

**Julian**—They be nice to you.

**Skyla**—They be good.

**Mayla**—They be nice to people and they sound like they're nice to you.

### Meet Mrs. Genzlinger

By Hope Genzlinger

Hi, I am Mrs. G! That's what everyone under 20 years old calls me. Others of you know me as Hope (Hennies) Genzlinger. I have been the Preschool/Daycare director and teacher at Zion since graduating from Concordia, Seward, in December 1999. As a life-long member of Zion, it was my dream to come back and teach in the school I attended. God gave me a wonderful principal-mentor in Priscilla Sayles, who had also been my 3rd grade teacher at Zion, and many other fantastic Lutheran teachers to work with and learn from. God continued His blessings with my husband, Devin, and our 3 children-Dalton, Dawson, and Heaven- while working at Zion. It was an amazing experience to have my children begin their school journeys in my classes.

Both working and worshipping at Zion takes up a good chunk of my time. When I'm not at Zion, I love to read, cook, try to grow green things, hike and play pickleball with my family, and learn more about Jesus. I feel so blessed to be a part of the ministry that God has been doing at Zion Lutheran Church, School, and Preschool. I feel extra blessed to have worked with many great people through the years. I will probably be here until I get a retirement cake, so hang on, Zion! We have many more littles and families to reach out to and add to our Zion family!



**Addison**—They hug and

play with me. Mom always gives me a kiss when we go to sleep.

**Rawling**—They play with me and eat with me.

**Adeline**—Hugs and saying "I love you" and having what I like.

**Scottlyn**—We're moving. They take me with.

**Atreus**—Be in charge of me.

## From the Principal's Office...

### Special Events for Our Parents & Students

- ◆ We will be celebrating the 100th Day of School on Tuesday, February 10th. Classrooms will be having different activities to recognize this day. What a blessing to be able to celebrate being in school for 100 days!
- ◆ Valentine's Parties will be on Friday, February 13th!
- ◆ February 14th -17th will be a long weekend. There will not be school on February 16th in recognition of Presidents' Day. There will not be class on February 17th as all teachers and staff will be participating in a professional development that day.

### Boys Basketball

This winter Zion has a 4th grade boys' basketball team. This team is led by Coach Brady, Coach Phil, and Coach James. Practices are on Wednesdays and Thursdays from 3:30-4:30pm.

During the season, there will be home games and away games against St. Paul's Lutheran School, Calvary Baptist School, Hill City and New Underwood. Watch the bulletin for dates and times for games!

### National Lutheran Schools' Week

National Lutheran Schools Week is a time for students, parents, and teachers to celebrate Lutheran education and serve others. It serves as an opportunity to proclaim God's great blessings within the communities we serve. Lutheran schools are amazing incubators for faithful witness of God's love for us through Christ by teachers and students alike.

Zion Lutheran School celebrates its 68th year being a mission of Zion Lutheran Church. We will celebrate National Lutheran Schools' Week February 1-6. We have so much to be thankful for, and so much to look forward to, as we walk through this school year with our Lord!

Look for special events and activities in future bulletin announcements!

### BINGO

Zion Lutheran School with Christ's Way Capital Campaign: Continuing in Faith, will be hosting the fourth annual Bingo Night on Friday, February 6th! There will be food, fun, and prizes! All the church and school families are invited to come and bring a friend! Plan for a fun night of fellowship!

**LUTHERAN SCHOOLS WEEK 2026** LET'S MAKE A JOYFUL NOISE!

- SUN 1** **ALL SCHOOL SINGS**  
At the end of the 8:00 service and the beginning of the 10:45 service
- MON 2** **HOLIDAY HULLABALOO**  
Wear a costume celebrating ANY holiday! Christmas? 4<sup>th</sup> of July? Valentine's Day? You pick!
- TUES 3** **CREATIVE CHARACTERS**  
Dress as a character from your favorite book!
- WED 4** **CLASS COLOR DAY**  
PreK Yellow Kindergarten Orange 1<sup>st</sup> Pink  
2<sup>nd</sup> Red 3<sup>rd</sup> Purple 4<sup>th</sup> Green 5<sup>th</sup> Blue  
Donuts with Growrups: 7:00am-8:15am  
Bring your favorite growrups to school for breakfast!
- THUR 5** **OPPOSITE AGE DAY**  
Kids dress as adults and adults dress as kids!  
1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Bowling @ Robbinsdale Lanes 8:30-11:15  
"Tat-a-Teacher" Day! All purchased tattoos will be on display! :)
- FRI 6** **CRUSADER DAY**  
Wear your Zion gear or Zion green!  
3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> Grade to Evan's Plunge @ 8:30am  
AM PreK & Kindergarten to the Elk's Theater @ 8:30am  
Don't forget Bingo Night from 5:30-7:00!



## Zion Lutheran School Pizza Night! Monday, February 2

Order Marco's Pizza on Monday, February 2, and 15% of your order will be donated back to the school (20% if you order online)! The class with the most orders will win a FREE PIZZA PARTY!

Order online at [marcos.com](https://marcos.com) or at 2201 Mt. Rushmore Rd location (605-791-2772).

- Enter code: ZL (capital letters) in the fundraiser box and hit APPLY
- Enter Teacher's Name & Grade

## NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: The Thomas Family

By Kate Meadows

Ben and Erin Thomas have learned a thing or two about following the road where it leads. Between the two of them, that road has crossed state lines, career changes and callings that eventually brought them to the Black Hills—and, happily, to Zion.

The Thomases have two boys – James (7) and Adam (5). Both are enrolled at Zion – James as a first grader with Mrs. Frerking and Adam as a preschooler. They completed Zion’s new members class last fall.

Erin’s story begins in Yellowstone National Park, where she grew up in Mammoth Hot Springs while her father worked as a wildland firefighter for the Park Service. She attended high school in Gardiner, MT, and from an early age developed a deep appreciation for the outdoors and public service. After studying finance in college and spending time in corporate sales, Erin felt drawn back to the National Park Service, working her way into administrative roles that blended her love of the parks with her skills in budgeting and finance. Positions at smaller parks, including Jewel Cave near Custer, meant doing a little of everything—housing, fees, maintenance support—work she found both challenging and rewarding.

It was during her time living in Custer that Erin met Ben, in 2016. Originally from Frederick, Maryland, Ben had been stationed at Ellsworth Airforce Base since 2011.

As Erin puts it, “We just knew very quickly that that was kind of it for us.”

Both were 34 at the time, and they soon discovered just how much they had in common. Ben’s father was a structural firefighter, while her dad was a wildland firefighter. Both are the oldest of 3 and both have 2 younger sisters. Their sisters were born in the same years.

“So many things aligned,” Erin said. “It was just wild.”

Ben has two older daughters, Carley and Gabby. Carley, 19, is studying education at Western Governors University online. Gabby, 17, is focused on nursing and plans to attend college locally.

James and Adam are the two fun-loving, energetic little brothers.

The Thomases’ journey to Zion began with a search for preschool. A spot opened up at Zion, and what started as a practical decision quickly became something more. Many people talked about how wonderful Zion’s preschool director Mrs. G (Hope Genzlinger) is.

“A lot of places were like, ‘Mrs. G is amazing,’ Erin said.

With the hunt for a preschool over, the search for a church was still on. Erin said she and Ben looked around Rapid City for a church and even attended a few but hadn’t found the right fit.

They found a right fit with Zion.

“The community—that’s why we wanted to join Zion,” Erin says. While they have been involved on the school side for four years, they didn’t become members of Zion until last fall.

In their time at Zion, their involvement has grown alongside their children. Erin volunteers weekly serving lunch, helps with classroom parties, and often drives for field trips. “I love how the church and the school are one,” she shares. “That’s really unique, and such a blessing.”

Ben retired from the Air Force in 2021. Today, he works as a financial advisor with Northwestern Mutual, while Erin does part-time bookkeeping.

As a family, they spend as much time outside as possible. Ben is a gifted woodworker, particularly when it comes to large furniture.

Erin said seeing people of all ages in and around the school every day is both an encouragement and a motivator for her.

“The older our kids get the more we’re involved in the school,” she said. You just don’t find the community anywhere nowadays that Zion has.”



## CONGREGATION MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Roger & Ann Woidtke

By Jan Meadows

Roger and Ann Woidtke have been members of Zion for about 25 years. They are long term Lutherans who were brought to South Dakota first by the Air Force, in the early 70's. Between deployments, the family returned to South Dakota, and Roger retired in Rapid City from the Air Force in 1986.

Ann was a homemaker before attending the Rapid City Regional School of Nursing beginning in 1981. She became a registered nurse in 1984 and spent the next 30 years in nursing.

Roger, originally a Hoosier from Logansport, Indiana, met Ann in Enid, Oklahoma, in 1965, where Roger was serving at Vance Air Force Base and Ann was a nursing student nearby at Enid General Hospital School of Nursing. They were married in 1966 in Buffalo, Oklahoma, Ann's hometown

They have two children and six grandchildren. Their daughter, Susan, has 3 children: twins, Gianna and Giancarlo, age 21; and 12-year-old Gabriella. Susan's family lives in Billings.

Their eldest child, Steve, and his wife, Gina, have spent their married lives at Zion and raised their three children at Zion. Their children are Allison, a 21-year-old student at the School of Mines; Adam, 19; and Eric, 17, both students at Stephens High School.

Roger and Ann returned to Rapid City in 2001. Steve and Gina suggested they come to Zion, and they've been here ever since.

Roger and Ann have always been active in the life of the church. Currently, Roger oversees the Fellowship Hour. That means he makes sure someone is going to be here on Sunday with coffee brewing and donuts ready, a ministry we all seem to love! He also leads a small group Bible study at Zion. In the past, he has served on the Board of Trustees. Ann currently is the co-chairman of the Funeral Committee, planning and preparing funeral luncheons. She also co-chairs the LWML and serves on Altar Guild.

As busy as both are, they still love volunteering in the community. Roger delivers Meals on Wheels weekly and works monthly at Feeding South Dakota. Ann is excited about helping others through Flutter Productions. Ann shares her love of sewing with others as she helps those with disabilities produce, perform and enjoy all that they can accomplish together.

Roger and Ann are not empty nesters. They share their home with Jenny, a sweet and lovable dog that they adopted from the local animal shelter as a pup 5 years ago.

The Woidtkes are particularly excited about the current Christ's Way, Continuing in Faith, campaign. They heartily welcome all the new families coming to Zion, and they look forward with joy to continued service to Jesus Christ through Zion Church, School and Preschool.



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### Women's Ministry

#### WICKS (Widows In Christ Know Salvation)

Join us for our next fellowship on Sunday, February 15, at 12:30 PM, at 1200 Range View Circle in the community room. Bring a salad, main dish or dessert to share and your own drink.

#### LWML Meeting

Zion Lutheran Women in Mission (LWML) will meet on Saturday, February 7, at 10:00 a.m. to address valentine cards for Zion's shut ins. Note the change of date! Also, a BIG thank you to Zion members for supporting our January Meals on Wheels ingathering. We received \$460 and were able to give the "Meals" program a check for \$500! What a fantastic way to begin a new year of mission work.



## Random Question with...Joel Palmreuter, Congregational Vice President

Share a Picture and Tell Us About it.

"This picture shows us cutting down a Christmas tree in 2024. I love getting out into the hills throughout the year, and we especially enjoy hiking, camping, and kayaking together. Being outdoors is important to me, but what really matters is spending time with family. No matter what we're doing, being together always makes it a good time."



**Lent Schedule**

**ASH WEDNESDAY: FEBRUARY 18**  
Service: 10am & 6:15pm  
Supper: 5:30pm

**WEDNESDAYS FEBRUARY 25-MARCH 25**  
Service: 10am & 6:15pm  
Supper: 5:30pm

**Holy Week**

**MAUNDY THURSDAY: APRIL 2**  
10am and 6pm

**GOOD FRIDAY: APRIL 3**  
10am and 6pm

**EASTER SUNDAY: APRIL 6**  
6am, 8am, and 10:45am

**BINGO NIGHT**

Join us for a night of fun and games at our Bingo Night! Get ready to shout "Bingo!" as we play for exciting prizes.

**FRIDAY FEBRUARY 6 | 5:30-7:00 PM**

## Upcoming Important Dates

- February 1:** Zion students sing at both services.
- February 1-6:** Lutheran Schools Week
- February 2:** Zion Night at Marcos Pizza (PTL Fundraiser @ Mt. Rushmore location or online)
- February 5:** Grades 1-2 go bowling @ Robbinsdale
- February 6:** Grades 3-5 go swimming @ Evans Plunge  
BINGO NIGHT @ Zion @ 5:30 PM
- February 7:** LWML Meeting @ Zion @ 10:00 AM
- February 15:** Nashville Youth Meeting @ 12:00 PM
- February 16:** No School/Daycare & Office Closed
- February 17:** No School/Daycare—Personal Development Day for staff.
- February 18:** Ash Wednesday
- February 20-22:** Youth Winter Retreat

**February 27-28:** Ladies Retreat @ Cedar Canyon Camp  
**March 13:** Kindergarten Screening @ Zion—contact the front office to schedule a time. There is no kindergarten class.

**March 14:** BIG Small Group Event—Chili & Pie @ Zion from 12:00-2:00 PM.

**IN A SMALL GROUP OF ANY KIND?**  
Come share about your group and enjoy chili and pie!

**INTERESTED IN GETTING CONNECTED?** Come join us! We have a group for you or will help get one started.

**RSVP in the narthex.**  
Questions may be directed to Lynette Epp, 605-786-3178.

