



2024 Annual Report

Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
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2024 Staff and Leadership

Congregation Council

Ross Anthony, President
Joe Darnell, Vice President
Liz Prystas, Secretary
Denny Gross, Treasurer
Sabrina Bell
Michael Drews
Tracy Hackworth
Jon Hall
Steve Newton
Nathan Seegert

Staff Members

The Rev. Michael Tassler, Pastor
The Rev. Tony Auer, Assisting Pastor (Retired)
David Chamberlin, Organist
Dave Zabriskie, Chancel Choir Director
Susan Swidnicki, Children's Choir Director
Tracy Hackworth, Parish Administrator
Chelene Fortier, Communications Specialist
Rex Graham, Caretaker
Teresa Gresham, Sunday School Superintendent
Sabrina Bell, Director, Let Me Shine Christian Playschool and Preschool
Holly Graham, Assistant Director, Let Me Shine Christian Playschool and Preschool



Pastor's Report

As we enter 2025, it is a joy to share this annual report of our 2024 ministries with the congregation. It has been a number of years since an annual report from Zion has been issued, and it seems the time is ripe to do so – not so much for “official” reasons – but because the following reports that fill *over 30 pages* are a vivid snapshot of the vibrant life and ministry of our congregation.

No single annual report can communicate everything that happens in and through our church, let alone what the essence of our congregation is. Last March, our congregation council met for a retreat and forged new mission, vision, and value statements. Here is what the council articulated as our Value Statement:

- We are a welcoming church that shares a generous spirit of hospitality with all.
- We value both our heritage as the first Lutheran congregation in Utah *and* trusting God in ventures of which we cannot see the ending.
- We put relationships ahead of institution.
- We are lighthearted and have fun together. We value excellence without being perfectionists.
- Loving one another and serving our neighbor is not an either/or. We do both with passion.
- We treat others with the same grace we have received in Christ.
- “Come as you are” is not just a dress code; God loves you as you are, and so will we.

I think this list captures well, for these times, what our essence as a congregation is.

Here is our Vision Statement:

Our vision is to be a beacon of God's grace and love, fostering a vibrant and inclusive community where all are welcomed, affirmed, and empowered to live out their faith boldly. Through meaningful worship, nurturing relationships, and compassionate service, we aspire to transform lives and communities, sharing the good news of God's love and grace to the world.

Finally, here is our mission statement:

Zion is a church on a mission to proclaim Christ through word and deed.

You'll hear me and Pastor Tony repeat this every Sunday in our worship announcements. While the mission statement is short (and memorable!), how we fulfill that mission is pronounced in our values and vision. This is who we are as the people of God at Zion, and this is what we do.



While these words are new, they convey what has always been the spirit of this congregation. Paul Mogren, in his marvelous “A Centennial History” (available in our library...when I remember to put it back!), cites the minutes of the organizational meeting of Zion on July 18, 1882, which conclude with these words: “A mustard seed is the smallest of seeds and yet it grows to be a big tree, so it is wherever the Word of God is preached there will be large gospel trees.”

In 1976, Pastor Harold Nilsson began serving Zion. Responding to a reflection by an interim pastor that Zion had currently lacked a mission, or goal (due to a fairly long lack of full-time leadership), Pastor Nilsson led the congregation to adopt this statement of purpose:

The mission of Zion Lutheran Church is to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. By his grace we worship together and individually, grow spiritually, commit our time, talent, and resources, witness to the freedom of the gospel, demonstrate concern, learn and teach, and are joined in a unique fellowship.

Proclaiming Christ has *always* – from its inception until this very day – been the center of Zion’s mission in this community! Those who have been part of Zion for decades, and the many newcomers who participate in the life of the congregation and join as members, are the faithful disciples who, by God’s grace, inform our values, cast our vision, and accomplish the mission to which God calls each of us.

I am so grateful for the privilege of serving as Zion’s pastor in this season. I remain astounded by and so thankful for the incredible gifts in this community. I invite you to marvel at and celebrate all that is reported below. It is an absolute joy to serve God’s mission with you. Thank you for welcoming me and for all you are and will continue to be.

The Rev. Michael Tassler
pastormichael@zelc.org



Assisting Pastor's Report

In baseball most players are trained and groomed for a particular position. Catchers catch, pitchers pitch, outfielders move from right to left but generally stay in the outfield, and infielders can swap bases, but generally stay within the infield. But most teams, especially college teams, also carry a player referred to as "utility." Generally not a starter, but a guy who can step into any position when called upon to do so.

That's me! I'm the "utility pastor" at Zion Lutheran Church. Just going to bat when needed and playing any position when required.

Over the past year the utility guy has preached and led worship, co-taught Bible Studies and New Member Orientations with Pastor Michael, taught a class on Oral Interpretation for readers, served on the Stream Team, entertained Zion's young adults, planned and hosted visitors from Madagascar for the Rocky Mountain Synod, and taught some Bible Studies on my own. And contributed to the care and feeding of the Sr. Pastor!

I love being a part of the pastoral team at Zion, and I love working with Pastor Michael. I've never had a more compatible partner in ministry. It is a real blessing.

And serving the congregation of Zion has been a real blessing too! You are a dynamic and energized congregation. Comforting when required and not afraid to challenge when required. And always committed to proclaiming Christ through Word and deed. I heard it said once, "The only thing worse than growing old is growing old without a purpose." I thank you, good people of Zion, for giving me a purpose!

The Rev. Tony Auer
papatony50@gmail.com



President's Report

I want to say how humbled and honored I am to have served as your Congregation Council President in 2024. Because the hearts of Zion Lutheran Church members are strong, and their faith is strong, the future of Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church is strong.

Our activities and accomplishments at Zion in 2024 were many, as you will see documented in the following reports. Our church is so vibrant and we all give thanks to God for this.

I wanted you to know of some of the special activities of your congregation council in 2024. It has been a great year of doing new things. To highlight a few:

- For the first time in a long time, the Zion Council took a retreat. In March, we met for one overnight at the beautiful Episcopal Retreat and Conference Center in downtown Salt Lake City. Focusing on creating deeper bonds of fellowship within the council to function as a true leadership ministry team, we spent time in worship, eating and fellowship, and developing new Mission, Vision, and Values statements for Zion, which are all posted on our website at www.zelc.org/missionvisionvalues.html. This was a very valuable experience and council plans to make the retreat an annual event.
- The Executive Committee (consisting of the president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer plus the pastor) committed to monthly meetings ahead of regular council meetings to proactively set agendas and increase engagement with deeper issues.
- The Council in 2024 focused on its policy-setting responsibilities and finalized new or enhanced policies for the congregation including a comprehensive Policy Manual (governing personnel policies and procedures); a Safe Haven Policy (governing child safety); Building Use Policy; Alcohol Use Policy; and a Gift Policy. Establishing these and future policies gives us a solid foundation for our life together and in the community.
- In 2024, the Council shifted from choosing a monthly to a Bimonthly Mission as a special focus for congregational outreach giving. The congregation has responded enthusiastically to these causes, which in 2024 included the Utah Food Bank, Shriner's Children's Salt Lake City, Alliance House, Christmas Box International, Global Refuge, and Lutheran Disaster Response - Hurricane Relief. Especially because of the children's noisy offering collections, we have seen enthusiastic giving to these missions and we thank you so much.

Looking forward to ministry in 2025!

Ross Anthony
ranthony@bhhsutah.com



Outreach Ministries

Stream Team

It's been an interesting and fun journey building our live-streaming service, that went live on September 8th. We have a group of four teammates who built the system (Pastor Tony Auer, Michael Drews, Chet Johnson and me) with different but complimentary skills and experiences.

I was like the 8th grader saying things like "let's plug this stuff in and see how it works." At the other end of the planning spectrum is Chet Johnson with the experience to know that we need to choose the right hardware for our needs. We need to have the software to run the hardware with system compatibility. Chet also pointed out the need to have operational protocols in place for things like copyright licenses, privacy and security for everyone.

In the middle is Michael Drews who is as excited as me to switch it on, but with the skills to make it all work. Many of Michael's vacation days were spent pulling wire and installing and he spent many evenings reading manuals. Next is Pastor Tony using his movie-making experience to identify camera angles, lighting, and sound for recording.

After building the system we now have a small but mighty group of operators. Susan Auer, along with Sarah, Matthew and Micheal Drews and I run the weekly worship streams. We have had combined views of over 3500. Seems we're having an impact.

In 2025 we may need to consider one or two replacement bits of hardware. We need to have a construction weekend to improve the platform where we sit with the system.

Lastly, we'd love to have more operators. It's easy and fun to direct your personal version of Sunday worship. Please contact me at the email below and we can make you part of the team.

Bob Hackworth
rrhackworth@aol.com



Communications Specialist

I began the new role of Communications Specialist in June 2024. Looked at the social media channels (Facebook and Instagram) and got them branded consistently, updated both profiles, and began a regular rhythm of posting a minimum of 2x a week – turns out posting happens more like 3x a week. The audience has grown slowly but steadily. When I started, there were around 3 likes per post; now we're seeing engagement in almost the teens (this is actually huge!!) and a (slowly) growing number of followers on each. Church social media is an interesting challenge: there is a fine balance between messaging the Zion "voice" and how we support and interact with comments and other accounts. Respect and compassion always come first in our posts and messages because, after all, a church is a place to rest and recharge our souls, and provide a space for community. My goal is to consistently mirror that in Zion's social messaging.

Newsletters! Pastor Michael had wanted to combine the Monday and Friday newsletters into one, and it finally happened! Last October saw the debut of "Grace and Fellowship," the new Friday-only newsletter.

Website: Look for some updates coming in the next few months as I help update the look and feel of the website to be more user-friendly and mobile-friendlier. I'd love some beta testers when this happens. If you're interested, please email me!

Goals for 2025:

- Outreach for community events
- ZELC-branded swag
- More than 400 followers on Facebook!

Chelene Fortier

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Reconciling in Christ

Since 2013, Zion has been a Reconciling in Christ (RIC) congregation, publicly affirming its full welcome, inclusion, and equity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual/aromantic (LGBTQIA+) individuals in all aspects of the life of the Church, the congregation, and the community.



In 2024, ReconcilingWorks, who sponsors the Reconciling in Christ initiative, requested that all active congregations update their RIC welcoming statements to include specific anti-racism language.

Margaret McCollum, Christian Mogren, Liz Prystas, and Pastor Michael Tassler recently completed this update.

Zion's amended statement reads:

We are committed to being a loving and welcoming community of faith in Jesus Christ. As a community of God, we welcome all. We celebrate the manner in which diversity enriches, nurtures, and challenges the life and ministry we share in Christ. Our Table is open, and we invite all to full participation in the life of our church regardless of race, sexual orientations, gender identities, gender expressions, socio-economic and marital statuses, physical or mental capacities, age, or social position. We commit to the work of anti-racism and all forms of structural, systemic, institutional, and personal bias.

As part of Zion's ongoing commitment to support the mission of Reconciling Works (ReconcilingWorks advocates for the acceptance, full participation, and liberation of all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions within the Lutheran Church), a gift of \$750 to the organization is included in Zion's 2025 budget and Zion commits to an annual gift hereafter.

Liz Prystas
eprystas@gmail.com

Speakers Series

As part of ministry planning for 2024, our fall 2023 stewardship appeal, "Freely You Have Received, Freely Give!" included as one of its ministry initiatives sponsoring a Speakers Series on the theme of "How to Have Civil Conversations Around Challenging Topics in Our Society."

The series came to fruition in the fall as we welcomed three outstanding local leaders:

Gay Lynn Bennion, Utah House of Representatives 41st District (October 22) spoke on "Conversations at the Doorstep."

Shawn Newell, Cottonwood Heights City Council Member (October 30) spoke on "Civility and Dignity."



Felicia Maxfield-Barret, President and CEO of Utah Global Diplomacy (November 5) spoke on “Tired of the Elections? How to Create Peaceful Change One Handshake at a Time.”

Each speaker shared their unique perspective and experiences before audiences that ranged from 25-40 in person. We also live-streamed these talks (which gathered dozens of views well after the live events).

We are planning to continue the Speaker Series in 2025 and beyond.

Pastor Michael Tassler
pastormichael@zelc.org

Local Donations Support

Zion Lutheran Church is a congregation of generosity!

Zion supports the Crossroads Urban Center via donations of food, small household items and clothing. These are collected at church in a blue bin located under the stairway, right next to the Preschool office. There are also labeled boxes there for food items.

These are delivered to a free food pantry operated by Crossroads and also to a Crossroads store that sells the donated items (at a *very* nominal cost) or provides them free via a voucher, to persons and families in need.

Due to the generous on-going donations, deliveries to Crossroads occur year-round on a weekly or semi-weekly basis by church volunteers.

Zion’s participation with donations has been continual for over three decades and is heartfelt by the recipients of these gifts.

If you’d like to help with deliveries or in any other way, please contact me at the email address below.

Peter Staks
peter@wardleycompanies.com



The Compassionate Friends

I am a facilitator of The Compassionate Friends, a very important outreach service that has been meeting at Zion since 2009. We greatly appreciate being allowed to gather at Zion.

The Compassionate Friends offers friendship and understanding to bereaved parents, siblings and grandparents who have suffered the death of a child. We have learned the pain can best be understood more fully by another who has experienced a similar loss.

We espouse no specific religious ideology, and we do not have professional counseling. We do recognize there is more than one way to grieve. We have autonomous local chapters which provide sharing groups where members learn that they are not alone, and we create an atmosphere of openness and honesty.

The Compassionate Friends meet in the gathering area at 7:00 PM, the second Tuesday of every month, except December, when we meet on the second Sunday. That night we have a candle lighting service (electric candles). People light candles at 7:00, in their time zone, to join hearts around the world. One can learn more about TCF through their website, emails, and word of mouth. www.compassionatefriends.org/.

Alyce Gross
adgross1@msn.com



Let Me Shine Christian Playschool and Preschool

Let Me Shine Preschool is on a mission to share God’s love with His children and to provide a welcoming Christian environment where children can grow spiritually, socially, and intellectually.

Let Me Shine Christian Playschool and Preschool is a ministry of Zion Lutheran Church. As such, Zion members receive priority enrollment and a 10% discount on tuition prices. We are a morning preschool (not a daycare); our hours are from 9-12 pm. We are also a state licensed facility. We employ 15 staff members plus Holly Graham (assistant director) and Sabrina Bell (Director).

We offer a morning bunch program where the child can be dropped off at 8 am to help families out who need an extra hour in the morning. Lunch Bunch is also another opportunity where the parents can extend their day an additional hour from 12-1. Lunch Bunch is by far one of our biggest programs. The child brings lunch from home, and we have a group activity for half an hour and then eat lunch for the other half.

We have 122 spots available. We accept children that are 18 months of age to PreK (4&5). The class options range from 2 to 5 days a week.

We follow a religious curriculum which consists of simple Bible stories that are taught throughout the week and followed up by chapel once a week. Children hear the Bible story in the classroom and at chapel. We place special emphasis on the Christmas and Easter stories and assure them they are loved by God.

We have an amazing music teacher who comes in each week to teach music to each class for 30 minutes a day. We have 2 music demonstrations each year – one at Christmas with the focus on the Christmas story, and a spring music demonstration that focuses on music skills learned throughout the year. The PreK kiddos have a special graduation program with cap and gown and an amazing music performance for the for the parents.

Our 2024 calendar year perhaps could be summed up with the word “improvement.” Our school is a well-run machine at this point, as we are in the middle of our 23rd year here at Zion. Still, Holly Graham and I believed that some improvements were able to be made to our school.

Professionally, Holly and I upgraded our computer systems, became well versed in Microsoft Excel and budgeting by taking community college courses, and switched over to QuickBooks



on-line, which is a much more efficient banking and budgeting system. We met with banking professionals to explore ways to maximize our savings and interest.

We have made many improvements to our facility this year. Our preschool office was recarpeted and reorganized. We acquired new furniture (shelving units and tables) for our classrooms and purchased other items (wall easels, writing desk units) to make our classrooms more functional.

We replaced the back gate (located in the alley) because the old one was bent and not secure. We purchased new playground and Lunch Bunch equipment with our spring appeal money. In order to store much of the new equipment, we purchased a new shed which is housed in the back alley. Along with the shed, we made other improvements to the alley area and playground. We had all the trees trimmed on the playground, had one tree removed, and had the south part of the back alley cleared of bushes and debris.

Our enrollment has stayed steady this year; we only have a few openings in the school, and our waitlist for the younger age groups is over 25 people long. Financially, we are sound. We are blessed to be a ministry of Zion Lutheran Church, and this December we wanted to give back to Zion. We presented Zion with a gift of \$9,500.00 to help pay for the fixing of the flood/leak area and with ongoing boiler issues. Additionally, we purchased a new stove and oven for the Zion kitchen at a cost of \$6000, as well as new dishwasher for the kitchen at a cost of \$24,770.00 (to be installed on January 20th).

Sabrina Bell
Let Me Shine Preschool Director
director@letmeshine.org



Fellowship Ministries

Greater Zion Day

On Sunday, July 21, 2024 our congregation celebrated “Greater Zion Day,” held annually since 1937 on the Sunday closest to our founding date of July 18, 1882. The anniversary date is called “Greater” Zion Day, because in Zion’s history, each year the Zion congregation joined with its branches in Bingham, Eureka, Park City, and Sandy to celebrate its founding. Over time, Bingham and Eureka disbanded and Park City and Sandy became independent congregations.

This year a festive crowd of about 55 people continued this annual celebration with a potluck in the Terrace Room, indoors instead of at a park due to the very hot weather we had in July.

Paul Mogren
paulamogren@yahoo.com

Coffee Hour

When the Sunday service is over, be sure to stop by the Atrium (fellowship space by the east entrance of the church) for a chance to chat with others over simple finger foods, coffee, and juice. Grab and go or linger around a table and partake in this informal Christian fellowship. Each Sunday, there’s an opportunity for one or two families to provide the snacks; other supplies are provided. Sign-up schedules are on the table in the narthex. There are always others around to help with the logistics and coffee making. For questions or assistance, please contact me.

Chet Johnson
chetj.slz@gmail.com

Wine & Cheese Gathering

On December 7, 2024, David and Cynthia Rowatt hosted Zion’s first holiday wine and cheese event since December 2019. The return of this tradition was welcomed by many long-time and new members of Zion, and their enthusiastic anticipation added to the event’s festive mood. Enjoyed by all was a delectable selection of appetizers and desserts provided by attendees. Wine and conversation flowed, and the atmosphere was warm and cheery. A special feature of the event was live music provided by “Jem Duo,” consisting of the talented guitarists Emily Hackworth and Jason Dreher. The success of the evening was a great start to the continuation of this tradition.

Cynthia Rowatt
rowattc@gmail.com



Salmon Run

The nearly annual Salmon Run fellowship event was held on September 7, 2024. In keeping with established tradition, four salmon preparations were grilled to perfection by Zion's grill masters. They were only surpassed by the exquisitely prepared chicken. Eighty-plus members and tag-a-longs enjoyed abundant sides, salads, and desserts, including homemade ice cream. The weather was perfect. Musical entertainment was provided by Emily Hackworth and Jason Dreher.

Mark Supiano
masupiano@gmail.com

Kathie Supiano
ksupiano@gmail.com

Editor's Note: Mark and Kathie have hosted the Salmon Run at their home for nearly two decades. The 2024 Salmon Run will have been their last time hosting, as they are planning a move in 2025. The community of Zion expresses gratitude to Mark and Kathie for all these years of hosting and hospitality!

Oktoberfest

Thank you to all the dedicated helpers who have made Oktoberfest the success it was, and has been for years and years. Oktoberfest has a special place in our hearts as the first Zion social event Marci and I attended, where we met several families who have become lifelong, closest, dearest friends!

In 2024 our Oktoberfest was on Utah Football's bye weekend, as has become the standard scheduling criteria. The beautiful, warm fall day made for a lovely backdrop to conversations outside around the grills and the taps, as well as inside as the copious varieties of potato salads and other specialties filled the tables. None of the fare disappointed!

Approximately 60 attended, friends old and new, and 20 helped with setup and decorating, cooking and grilling, and cleanup.

We (and the yeast) look forward to hosting again in 2025, and sincerely hope everyone can make it. Don't forget: Kinder willkommen und Lederhosen optional!

Jon Hall
jhh87@gmail.com



Family Fun Activities

Family Fun Activities have a long history at Zion that began as a vision of a council member who wanted her children to see the church as more than a formal place to worship and attend church. She wanted her children to experience the friendship, comradery, and family fellowship that our church had to offer. Thus, Friday Fun Nights began in the late 1990s. These activities would happen once a month and would continue until 2012. Then the format switched from Friday night to a Sunday after church format with only the two most popular activities being planned - Pumpkin Carving & Gingerbread House Decorating. This new format allowed these activities to be more inclusive of the whole church family.

During 2024, I helped organize the following:

- Valentine Spaghetti Lunch, Sunday, February 4th. 43 people attended, including 23 adults and 20 kids. The meal consisted of Spaghetti with marinara, meat sauce or Leska's special sauce, Caesar salad, French bread, desserts, and a punch. Valentine cards were made that were mailed to friends of Zion as provided by Pastor Michael.
- Pumpkin Carving with BBQ cookout lunch, Sunday, October 27th. There were 60 people in attendance, including 30 adults and 30 kids. The congregation council hosted the BBQ lunch this year with hamburgers and hot dogs, chips and cookies. People were asked to bring their own pumpkins to carve along with their own supplies. A few pumpkins and supplies were on hand for those who may have needed one along with some supplies.
- Gingerbread House Activity, Sunday, December 15th. 65 people were in attendance, including 38 adults and 27 kids. The meal consisted of 3 different soups, salad, bread, desserts and drinks. During the Sunday school hour, helpers constructed the graham cracker houses. Participants were asked to bring a decorating item to share.

Angie Reuschel
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Worship and Music Ministries

Altar Guild

Altar Guild is a behind-the-scenes group that is responsible for setting up, taking down, and cleaning paraments, banners, worship accessories, and communion essentials each weekend for worship services. We are a ministry team of Zion who work closely with Pastor Michael and Pastor Tony, and are always looking for new faces to join us!

For 2024, we had a great problem – not enough wine! Our attendance at worship service is growing (awesome!) so our dedicated group made adjustments...pour more wine! Bake more bread! Thank you to Ann Marie Mogren, Linda Hoge, and Jane Erdahl who bake the crisp unleavened bread each week. For the five Sundays in the summer when the gospels were from the Gospel of John and we learned about Jesus as the “bread of life,” we enjoyed bread baked in the sanctuary during the service for communion – thank you bakers Susan Auer and Tracy Hackworth!

The highlight of the year was our get together at Marci Hall’s house in November, where we had fellowship, lots of great food, and sampled much more prestigious vintages than our normal communion wine.

Altar Guild is grateful to serve Zion. Thanks to all who participate in this ministry team. If you’d like to learn more about the Altar Guild, please email me!

Holly Graham
holly@letmeshine.org

Lenten Soup Suppers

Lenten Soup Suppers started up in 2024 after a few year hiatus thanks to Pastor Michael’s initiative. With the introduction of QR codes and Sign-Up Genius, it was easy to include many helpers.

Delicious soups and breads (Marci Hall’s sourdough was a big hit) were enjoyed each Wednesday evening during Lent. Our attendance fluctuated between 25-40 people each week. After soup supper, we were treated to the beautiful voices of Rachel Kibler, Scott Reuschel, Jon Hall, and Erin Bramscher leading the singing of Holden Evening Prayer in Lenten Worship.

I know the congregation is looking forward to another year of Lenten soup suppers in 2025!

Holly Graham
holly@letmeshine.org



Children's Music Ensembles

Thanks to the generous support and encouragement from the congregation, our music program for teens and children has grown in the past year in both skill, enthusiasm and numbers of participants. Each Sunday, we have from 20-35 youth who worship and learn about the Gospel of Jesus with singing and beautiful Orff percussion instruments.

Our goals continue to be that each young member of our congregation is given a chance to follow the Biblical mandate to worship God musically, for our young musicians to grow in their confidence and skills, for each to enjoy authentic community, and for the teens and children to make meaningful contributions to our worship life as a congregation. We currently have our teen Orff percussion group as well as two choirs, one for children who are preschool through 1st grade and one for children in 2nd-5th grades which meet weekly as part of our Sunday School program throughout the academic school year.

We try to have at least one group perform each month in our regular worship service, as well as present a Christmas Lessons and Carols program and help to lead the annual Palm Sunday worship. In the past year we have been blessed to see kids really grow in bravery, self-control (executive functioning), and enthusiasm, as we try to combat some of the long-term effects Covid had on our young people. We have also seen much more positive interaction between kids as they have been able to spend more in-person time together. I am very grateful for the families and kids of Zion and hopeful for the future of music and ministry for them here at Zion.

Susan Swidnicki

sljswidnicki@gmail.com

Vacation Bible School Music Camp

Our Vacation Bible School Music Camp was a wonderful experience in June. Our theme for the week was The Beatitudes. We were blessed to have 50 children, 14 teen junior counselors, ten highly skilled paid staff and countless volunteers and contributors from the Zion congregation.

VBS is an important outreach ministry for our congregation. More than 2/3 of participating children and teens come from another church or congregation or have no home church. Because of the congregation's generous support of VBS, we can offer tuition for the very affordable price of \$25 for the week. We also offer scholarships, funded by individual members of our congregation, so that anyone who wants to attend may do so without hardship. The congregational funding also helps us to hire enough help that we can meet the needs of children with more diverse learning styles and abilities. This proves to make a much richer environment



for everyone involved. Children participate in Bible study, singing, Orff percussion instruments, skits, outdoor games, African drumming and dance, visual arts, crafts, and organ show and tell. Older elementary aged kids also learn to play lap dulcimer and participate in praise band. This year our service project was making two hundred sack lunches with personal notes for St. Vincent de Paul's hunger program.

Zion's VBS is unique in this region and we have had amazing support, both from our congregation and from the families who attend. We see many children who return year after year and go on to become teen counselors and even end up working for VBS as young adults. We also have been blessed with a very strong and dedicated faculty who return year after year and make the program a joy to be involved with. We look forward to another VBS Music Camp this coming summer from June 23-27, 2025.

Susan Swidnicki
sljswidnicki@gmail.com

Chancel Choir

The Chancel Choir has been serving Zion Lutheran Congregation for decades. I remember the first time I walked into the choir room when I became Music Director of the choir. There was this beautiful, large picture of the choir taken in the 60s that was hanging on the wall. What a wonderful tradition the choir has been over so many decades.

2024 was a year of growth for the choir. We have been blessed with five new choristers. Each Sunday we gather in the choir room at 8:45 a.m. to sing, learn music, develop friendships and rejoice in singing songs to the glory of God. The choir ranges from young to old, to beginner singers to the experienced - all coming together to make music and to sing praise.

We encourage anyone to come and participate with the choir. We make rehearsals and singing services flexible to meet your needs.

I am grateful for each member of the choir. I love seeing them each week. Choir is like a Sunday school class where learning about Jesus through music is poignant and heartfelt.

Dave Zabriskie
davecomposer@gmail.com



Ushers

2024 was uneventful in the ushering department. With the departure of Bob Hackworth to the Stream Team, we have a consistent small group of regular ushers (Mike Gruenhagen, Doug Graham and Rex Graham), along with other last minute volunteers. Although small, we are highly effective and very consistent in these duties.

One of the main jobs of an usher is to be a front-line, first encounter showing Zion hospitality and welcome to our worshipers. It's always a pleasure to see new as well as old faces. If you'd like to help out ushering, please send me an email or talk to me at church.

Doug Graham
40grambo@msn.com

Organ

Last July marked 37 years as Zion's organist. I started on Greater Zion Day in 1987. I'm excited to make it to 40, and hopefully 50! I feel very privileged to be part of the worship team, working with our pastors, Chancel Choir Director Dave Zabriskie, Children's Music Director Susan Swidnicki, and Parish Administrator Tracy Hackworth.

I'm also very grateful for the support of the congregation in making improvements to the organ – those accomplished so far and those yet to come.

David Chamberlin
david@chamberlinmusic.com



Faith Formation Ministries

Children's Sunday School

Zion's Sunday School classes continued to expand in 2024. We registered 35 children in the 2023-2024 school year, and 42 kids in the 2024-2025 school year. We increased our number of teachers from 17 to 21, including a strong support team. Below are a few highlights:

- We presented Bibles to 2nd graders on May 12
- Three 9th graders were confirmed on May 19
- We opened registration for the 2024-2025 year in August
- Rally Day was on September 8, and classes began the next week

We continue to prioritize all-age activities. These activities encourage kids to build a Christian community, which supports their faith journey and continued participation in the church. On October 13, all Sunday School classes worked together to pack 50 lunches and decorate cards to donate to St. Vincent's meals for the homeless program. On November 17, all of the kids decorated placemats that were laminated and sent to our homebound members.

We also have looked for opportunities for classes to merge together. This provides the kids an opportunity to get to know others outside of their classes in a smaller setting, and the older kids can demonstrate faith maturity to the younger kids. This also helps kids be more comfortable when they move up to the next class each fall. Our middle school and high school classes join together once a month, enjoying the time as a youth group. Our 2nd-3rd and 4th-5th grade classes join about once a quarter, and our PreK and K-1st grade classes join once or twice a year.

Teresa Gresham, Sunday School Superintendent
teamgreshamgo@gmail.com

Adult Sunday Morning Bible Study

John 8:31-32: "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."

The Bible holds God's treasure for us, and it must be opened and shared, so that is what we do Sundays at 9:00 in the lounge. Our focus is on the Gospel and other lessons of the day as we open-mindedly ask questions and share knowledge and opinions. The average attendance is about 12 (a good number for disciples!). All are welcome, especially those who are new to the Bible. We have had this tradition for about 30 years, and it never gets stale, because the Gospel is always rich with meaning and relevance. It truly is the living word.

Alyce Gross
adgross1@msn.com



Women's Bible Study with Prayer and Fellowship

I've learned that when I pray for someone, I grow in love and concern for them. We have been meeting a long time and have changed and evolved. In the past we met in members' homes, but now we usually meet on Zoom, the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month at 7:00 PM. There are 12 of us, and we meet if we have at least 4 women available. Our studies have varied from whole books of the Bible, a few chapters at a time, to doing a short Advent Study in Luke. In the new year we will discuss seven miracles (signs) in the Gospel of John. Erin Basta sends a reminder email several days before the meeting, asking who is able to attend. If you are interested in joining, send an email to Erin at erin_basta@msn.com.

We love welcoming new women!

Alyce Gross
adgross1@msn.com

Men's Small Group

The Men's Small Group is a group of about seven or eight guys in their senior years, that get together twice monthly, in the evening from 6:30pm to 8:00pm at church. Someone opens with an opening prayer, someone else reads a Bible verse that they find meaningful, and a third person asks an ice breaker "question" for discussion.

Over the years we've read (and reviewed) lots of books including; "About The Bible," "Healing the Heart of Democracy," "Proof of Heaven," "Why Bad Things Happen to Good People," "A New Kind of Christianity," "The Nag Hammadi Scriptures," "The Parables of Grace," "Christianity Family Tree," "The Gospel of the Kingdom" and others.

We've also watched Ted Talks, reviewed magazine articles, and recently reviewed The Apocrypha, which are books included in the Bible by other faiths. We usually conclude with noting anyone that we might add in our individual prayers.

While this may sound like a lot of study, frankly a lot of our time is spent catching up with happenings at church and being engaged in manly banter. If this sounds of interest, come visit at a meeting or two. Feel free to contact Peter Staks at the email address above.

If you think another small group of compatible folks (singles, young couples, families, or any other cohort group) might wish to start a small group, we would be happy to mentor a new group into start-up!

Peter Staks
peter@wardleycompanies.com



Wednesday Morning Men's Bible Study

We've been an active small group for over 30 years, originally centered on breakfast and meeting early at church to accommodate working members. During COVID, meetings switched to Zoom and a later start (8:00 AM) which is also a better fit for the largely retired membership. Among other Bible studies over the past year, we've begun a verse-by-verse study of the Old Testament starting from Genesis 1:1, consistently uncovering new insights and new questions. Sessions often include videos from The Bible Project for historical context and a broader perspective. The meetings typically start with 20–30 minutes of "social interaction" followed by prayer. Please contact me for more information.

Chet Johnson
chetj.slc@gmail.com

Confirmation

For the past few years, Zion Sunday school youth in grades 7-9 have received confirmation instruction based on "Colaborate" (spelling correct!) a Lutheran-based curriculum published by Sparkhouse. Included among its 60 lessons are sessions that visit Old and New Testament topics, as well as discussions of Lutheran history, Luther's Catechism, and Lutheran Living.

More than merely focusing on the facts of each lesson, Liz Prystas, Peter Staks, and Fred Strohacker urge the students to look for new insights in long-heard stories, to understand the relevancy of the lessons to their lives today, and to listen for God's promises to them in all that they read and hear.

In May 2024, Ella Darnell, Paavo Gresham, and Bela Miller (all then 9th graders) celebrated the affirmation of their baptism in a ceremony held before the congregation.

Beginning in the fall of 2024, the faith formation class was shifted to include grades 6-8. The current roster includes 10 students, the largest of the entire Sunday school!

Zion is indeed blessed by these bright, faithful young individuals – as well as their faithful families.

Liz Prystas
eprystas@gmail.com



Caring Ministries

Stephen Ministry

As one of its 2024 Stewardship Initiatives, Zion initiated the Stephen Ministry program last year.

Stephen Ministry is a worldwide organization that has been helping people since the 1970s. It was founded by Kenneth Haugk, a pastor and clinical psychologist. He realized that there was a great need for lay members to share the love of Christ with people going through a crisis or life difficulty. The provided care is entirely confidential.

The blessings of Stephen Ministry are numerous. Stephen Ministers carry out Christ's commandment to "Love one another as I have loved you," (John 15:12), in a powerful and practical way. They use their knowledge and gifts in a meaningful ministry, growing spiritually as they serve others. Care receivers who are hurting have a caring Christian caregiver to provide emotional and spiritual support.

In February and March, Pastor Michael Tassler, Kathy Foulks, and Liz Prystas received training as Stephen Ministry Leaders. Over the following several months, they recruited Zion's inaugural class of Stephen Ministers, who began their training in October.

Zion is currently blessed to have 4 Stephen Ministers in training to provide Christ-centered care. Susan Auer, Sabrina Bell, Holly Graham, and Jorgen Hollnagel are currently learning important skills to enable them to provide a listening ear and caring heart. When they finish 20 modules of training in March 2025, they will become caregivers and walk with their care receivers through various difficulties in their lives.

Stephen Ministers trust in God for the healing; God is the cure giver. The role of the Stephen Minister is to prepare the soil. "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow" (1 Corinthians 3:6). Our Stephen Ministers will be the hands and feet of Christ as they provide care and help to carry out the mission of Zion to nurture relationships and provide compassionate service.

Liz Prystas
eprytas@gmail.com

Kathy Foulks
kmaloha@hotmail.com



Lay Eucharistic Visitors

In 2024, Zion commissioned two Lay Eucharistic Visitors – Susan Auer and Kathy Foulks – who, approximately monthly, bring Holy Communion consecrated in the Sunday service to those who are homebound, ill, or otherwise wish to have communion at home.

I'm one of the Lay Eucharistic Visitors and, as such, am prompted to mention that I like to endeavor new things that are bit scary. Being scared is now in the rearview mirror, replaced by sharing the eucharist and intimate visits with a few people whom I now consider dear friends. I'm the supposed minister and yet am blessed by these folks.

I encourage others to face your hesitation and reach out in arenas where you feel great confidence, or maybe even a little confidence. The other things I'm involved in at church are being part of the stream team (at first really scary, now not so much) and are serving at the coffee hour – both activities that are quite fulfilling.

Susan Auer
susan0929@gmail.com

It has been my distinct privilege to bring the Eucharist to three home bound members this year.

I was honored to visit and give the Eucharist to Verna Hanson until she completed her baptismal journey in April. I am currently visiting Diane Teece and Ron Chytraus. Ron enjoys watching the worship service online. They both appreciate the visits, and I am always blessed when I give them communion.

Kathy Foulks
kmaloha@hotmail.com

To learn more about this ministry or to become a Lay Eucharistic Visitor, speak with Susan, Kathy, or Pastor Michael Tassler (pastormichael@zelc.org).



Property Ministries

Property Management

Many needed repairs & improvements were made to the church building in 2024.

- 2 New water fountains w/water bottle filling capabilities
- Repairs made to a broken water main on the northeast corner of the building last spring
- Repairs to the flat roof area over the offices to stop water leakage
- New outdoor lighting at the east and south entrances
- Upgrade the internet to Google Fiber
- Purchased new, light-weight folding chairs primarily used in the atrium
- Cleaned the red chairs in the terrace room
- New 6 burner gas range & new dishwasher (1/20/25), thanks to Let Me Shine! Preschool
- Trees trimmed (south lot) and trees removed (north lot), including some that were too close to the building
- New light switches installed to light the stairs leading to the robe room, as well as the area behind the organ
- Repairs currently being made to abate continuous flooding issues resulting from hard rains & snow melt

We have now established solid working relationships with a plumber, electrician, boiler company, carpet cleaners, and safety inspection company for the building's sprinkler system, as well as a new company for elevator maintenance.

There is a signed, 3-year preventative maintenance agreement for our boiler system so we have experts inspecting & maintaining our boiler & HVAC systems 4 times a year. This will definitely help to keep us more consistently warm in the winter and cool in the summer months!

Doug Graham
40grambo@msn.com

Tracy Hackworth
office@zelc.org



Landscaping Ministry Team

As a part of enhancing our facilities and property excellence at Zion, in the summer of 2024 a new Landscaping Ministry Team was formed. Initial team members are Jo Grahn, Peter Staks, Fred Strohacker, Linda Strohacker, and Janel Trapp.

The basic vision of this team is to plan create renewed, beautiful, and sustainable landscaping. As good stewards of God's gift of creation, it is paramount for us to create landscaping that uses limited resources (water!) wisely. We want our landscaping, so far as we are able, to be aesthetically attractive and ecologically sound.

The team met several times in the late summer, and was involved in investigating and suggesting solutions to the flooding that took place in the building, which is being remediated at this writing.

It is envisioned that this team will meet for a year or two, developing a plan and a budget for a long-term, sustainable enhancement of our landscaping.

If you'd like to learn more or be a part of this team, please contact me by email.

Jo Grahn
jograhn@gmail.com

Caretaker

For many years, Zion has had caretakers who live onsite and take care of a number of responsibilities. I have been the Zion caretaker for about a year and a half.

Overall, this has been a productive year. The riding mower was repaired and tuned up. We have had a lot of wind damage to the trees, bringing down one and several large and small branches and leaves around the property. I worked closely with the property management team to help mitigate leaks, flood issues, and boiler problems. In addition to my regular weekly duties and regular minor maintenance, Tracy Hackworth and I meet weekly to address upcoming building needs and events. This has greatly helped in managing and preparing the church for whatever needs arise. I look forward to another productive winter of snow removal and ice melt distribution. There have been a few security issues this year with mostly teenagers causing disturbances on and around the church property. Stakes were installed to keep people from driving through the south lawn when the gate is closed.

Rex Graham
grahamrex13@gmail.com



Administrative Ministries

Counters

For 2024, Zion had eleven faithful members serving to count the weekly offerings. Counters usually count and record the offerings right after the Sunday service, or after any special services, enter the offerings into the Servant Keeper software (which serves as the basis for on-demand contribution statements for members), and take the checks and cash directly to the bank for deposit. Zion has many general and specific accounts to help us keep track of donations, as we always want to be sure we are adhering to donors' wishes or special requests. Our dedicated and careful counters make sure all this is recorded accurately.

Ann Marie Mogren
ambreznay@gmail.com

Parish Statistics

Baptized Members (active and inactive): 397

(Baptized members are those persons who have been received by the Sacrament of Holy Baptism in this congregation, or, having been previously baptized in the name of the Triune God, have been received by certificate of transfer from other Lutheran congregations or by affirmation of faith. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church Constitution C8.02a.)

Confirmed Members: 216

(Confirmed members are baptized persons who have been confirmed in this congregation, those who have been received by adult baptism or by transfer as confirmed members from other Lutheran congregations, or baptized persons received by affirmation of faith. Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church Constitution C8.02b.)

Voting Members: 209

(Voting members are confirmed members. Such confirmed members, during the current or preceding calendar year, shall have communed in this congregation and shall have made a contribution of record to this congregation.)



Baptisms: 3 (Wally Garrison; Sophie Narjes; Jackson Narjes)

Deaths: 3 (Alan Kepka; Verna Hanson; Bob Pembroke)

Weekly worship in-person average attendance: 99

Streaming views: 3,550 (including over 500 on Christmas Eve)

Weekly Sunday school average attendance: 32 children; 12 Adults

Lenten Wednesday evening Soup Supper average attendance: 27

Lenten Wednesday evening Worship average attendance: 30

Tracy Hackworth
office@zelc.org



Financial Reports

Stewardship Team

The Stewardship for all Seasons program embarked on its second year in January 2024. This was its first full year which allowed time for the congregation to be engaged in the ministry of stewardship throughout the year. In the Season of Preparation we added new team members and developed plans for the 2025 appeal. During the Season of Study, members were invited to take a deep dive into Henri Nouwen's book, *A Spirituality of Fundraising*. Through individual or group study, members became enriched by this spiritual foundation for stewardship. This set the stage for the Season of Evaluation and Planning and the development of the ministry initiatives for 2025. In addition to sustaining the enhancing our ministry excellence initiative, two new initiatives – Dinner Church and hiring a part-time Director of Youth and Family Ministry – were proposed. This culminated in the “Abundant Grace – Abundant Giving” theme for the Season of Asking and Giving and the 2025 appeal.

At year end, Statements of Intent have been received from 61 households expressing a financial commitment of \$358,700 toward Zion's 2025 financial needs.

It's not too late to submit a statement of intent. We are very grateful for all who do! Please scan this QR code to reach a secure and confidential online statement of intent.



There are many exciting things moving in and through Zion and the expansion of our mission through these ministry initiatives that have been possible by the generous financial and other commitments its members have expressed.

Mark Supiano
masupiano@gmail.com



Treasurer's Report

Zion Lutheran Church experienced a solid financial year. Giving and outside income amounted to \$487,443 and budgeted income was \$499,000. Negative cash flow was only \$5,127 because expenses were under budget by \$6,430.

As noted in the Stewardship Team report, appeal 61 statements of intent were submitted for a total of \$358,700. A significant portion of revenues come from general giving outside of commitments (\$65,000).

Outside income accounts for a significant portion of ZELC's income. Outside income sources include:

- T-Mobile monthly payment for use of the bell tower as a transmission site (\$25,205).
- Let Me Shine gives Zion \$925 each month for building cleaning and maintenance (\$11,100).
- Members using Thrivent Financial services can designate funds that Thrivent distributes from its charitable grant funds. Some Zion members elect to have those funds go to ZELC (\$2,250).
- Interest income from savings at Fidelity Investments (\$12,300).
- Facility use by church members and outside parties (\$815).

In February we engaged the accounting services of Melissa (Mel) Wilczek. At that time, Mel already provided accounting services to 6 other churches and 8 non-profits. Her services through 2024 have been very good. We receive monthly financial statements by the 11th of each month. When we hired Mel, our banking relationship was with Chase Bank. That was not a good fit for Zion and Mel introduced us to her favorite Zions Bank branch. We then moved our banking relationship to Zions Bank. Their service has been excellent.

We also solidified a relationship with Fidelity Investments. We have a savings balance at Fidelity of \$272,000 which earns about \$1,000 monthly in interest income. We are able to easily move money from Fidelity via a simple on-line request. Of the \$272,000, \$54,991 is committed to specific uses such as Vacation Bible School Fund and the Organ Improvement Fund.

Let Me Shine (LMS) Christian Playschool is an ongoing preschool that operates through the school year in Zion's building. It is a significant Zion outreach ministry that was established in 2002. LMS does an excellent job of managing their revenues and expenses. I want to recognize LMS in this report for their financial support to Zion. Well beyond their \$925 monthly donation to building maintenance needs, they have contributed significantly to building improvements. They recently committed to covering the costs for repairing water leaks that come into Zion's basement at 3 different locations, as well as a thermostat upgrade for managing the HVAC



needs in classrooms. Beyond that, they anticipate covering the cost of a new industrial dishwasher in the Terrace Room kitchen. When you see Sabrina Bell or Holly Graham, please thank them for the generous LMS financial support.

Here is a summary of ZELC's financial condition through 12-31-2024:

Summary of Assets and Liabilities

Liquid Assets		Liabilities	
Zions Bank Cash	\$53,659	Current Liabilities:	
Fidelity Savings	\$273,245	Accounts Payable	\$1,527
Total Liquid Assets	\$326,904	Credit Cards	\$6,060
		Payroll Taxes and Benefits	\$4,832
Fixed Assets		Total Current Liabilities	\$12,420
Building	\$1,318,600	Long-Term Liabilities:	
Land	\$97,000	Thrivent Mortgage Payable	\$165,832
Total Fixed Assets	\$1,415,600	Total Long-Term Liabilities	\$165,832
Total Assets	\$1,742,504	Total Liabilities	\$178,252
		Equity	\$1,564,252

Schedule of Dedicated Funds Accounts

Vacation Bible School	\$2,765
Bi-Monthly Mission	\$1,255
Chancel Choir	\$768
Children's Choir	\$550
Staff Gifts	\$400
Sunday School	\$15
Organ Improvement Fund	\$46,580
Let Me Shine Scholarship	\$2,658
Total Dedicated Funds	\$54,991



Summary of Income and Expenses

Income

Giving Income	\$421,699
Stock Donations	\$11,098
Other Income	\$54,646
Total Income	\$487,443

Expenses

Business Expenses	\$33,162
Maintenance and Repair	\$70,640
Utilities	\$43,619
Rocky Mountain Synod Mission Support	\$30,000
Parish Administration (including salary)	\$59,586
Other Wages	\$44,142
Pastor	\$115,818
Assisting Pastor	\$12,000
Other Expenses	\$83,602
Total Expenses	\$492,570
Net Revenue	-\$5,127

Opportunities for Giving

Zion, like most congregations, usually has financial needs that seem to keep growing. Each week in the worship service bulletin, you can see a QR code (Quick Response) that allows you to donate to specific categories of Zion financial needs. The code takes you to a financial giving option called Vanco. You need to provide an email address and establish a password. Then you can either use a credit card or provide your banking information to make future donations. Once that information is provided, it will be available anytime you use Vanco for future donations.

Thank you for your ongoing generosity. The ministry at Zion is growing because of your involvement and financial support.

Denny Gross, Treasurer
dennisg144@gmail.com