

December 24, 2023 • Fourth Sunday in Advent  
10:00am



**Zion** *lutheran  
church*

## WELCOME TO ZION

When we gather for worship, we're receptive to God's word and we rejoice in God's grace through song, prayer, and Holy Communion. The history of Christian worship is rich with rituals formed by generations. These traditions, prayers, and pastoral teachings help connect our lives with Christ. In our daily lives, we show God's love by serving our community, both locally and globally.

We are a group of believers seeking to respond to Christ's call to worship and serve, even as we wrestle with the big questions of life. We want you to know that you and your questions, faith, and doubts are welcome here!

## HOW WE WORSHIP

The Holy Spirit gathers people around the means of grace: the Word of God and the Sacraments. From the table of Holy Communion where Christ comes with forgiveness, life, and salvation, God sends us out to share the good news and care for those in need. Our worship follows this pattern in four parts: Gathering, Word, Meal, and Sending. By its very nature, Lutheran worship is participatory and the service is contained within this bulletin. Worship leaders guide us through the service and our responses are printed in **bold type**.

We welcome children in our worship services! If needed, a nursery is available down the hallway past the restrooms. The restrooms contain changing tables, as needed.

Throughout the service, members of Zion's music ministry offer their talents as an offering to God. Please receive their musical gifts as a time for prayer, contemplation, or praise of God rather than a performance to be applauded, so that we may worship God throughout our time here together.

## Zion Lutheran Church

9944 Leslie Road • San Antonio, Texas 78254 • 210-688-3090 • [zion@zionsa.org](mailto:zion@zionsa.org)

# GATHERING

*The Holy Spirit, the Comforter, gathers us in worship.*

PRELUDE

*Carillon on "Sleepers, Wake!" by David Paxton*

Sandy Musk  
Organist

WELCOME

Pastor Dan Heim

*Please rise, as you are able.*

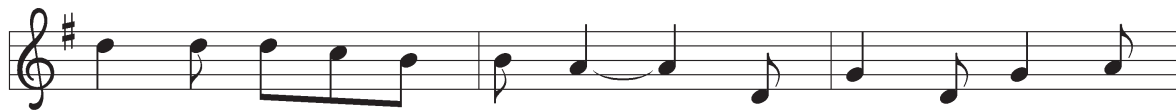
*Section end. Section end.*

GATHERING HYMN

Awake, Awake, and Greet the New Morn



1 A - wake! A - wake, and greet the new morn, for  
 2 To us, to all in sor - row and fear, Em -  
 3 In dark - est night his com - ing shall be, when  
 4 Re - joice, re - joice, take heart in the night, though



an - gels her - ald its dawn - ing. Sing out your joy, for  
 man - u - el comes a - sing - ing, his hum - ble song is  
 all the world is de - spair - ing, as morn - ing light so  
 dark the win - ter and cheer - less, the ris - ing sun shall



soon he is born, be - hold! the Child of our long - ing.  
 qui - et and near, yet fills the earth with its ring - ing;  
 qui - et and free, so warm and gen - tle and car - ing.  
 crown you with light, be strong and lov - ing and fear - less.



Come as a ba - by weak and poor, to bring all hearts to -  
 mu - sic to heal the bro - ken soul and hymns of lov - ing -  
 Then shall the mute break forth in song, the lame shall leap in  
 Love be our song and love our prayer and love our end - less



geth - er, he o - pens wide the heav'n - ly door and  
 kind - ness, the thun - der of his an - thems roll to  
 won - der, the weak be raised a - bove the strong, and  
 sto - ry; may God fill ev - 'ry day we share and



lives now in - side us for - ev - er.  
 shat - ter all ha - tred and blind - ness.  
 weap - ons be bro - ken a - sun - der.  
 bring us at last in - to glo - ry.

Text: Marty Haugen, b. 1950  
 Music: REJOICE, REJOICE, Marty Haugen  
 Text and music © 1983 GIA Publications, Inc., 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358.  
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## GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

## KYRIE

The musical score is written for two voices (Soprano and Bass) and piano accompaniment. It is in the key of D major (two sharps) and 4/4 time. The score consists of two systems. The first system is for the first voice, with lyrics: "Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy." The second system is for the second voice, with lyrics: "Christ, have mer - cy. Christ, have mer - cy." The piano accompaniment consists of chords in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand. The lyrics are written below the vocal staves, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across notes. The piano part includes a melodic line in the right hand and a bass line in the left hand.

Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy. Lord, have mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy, have mer - cy.

Lord, have mer - cy, have mer - cy.

Music: *Deutsche Messe*, Franz Schubert, 1797–1828; adapt. Richard Proulx, b. 1937  
 Adapt. © 1985, 1989 GIA Publications, Inc. 7404 S. Mason Ave., Chicago, IL 60638. www.giamusic.com. 800.442.3358.  
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## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. With your abundant grace and might, free us from the sin that would obstruct your mercy, that willingly we may bear your redeeming love to all the world, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

*Please be seated.*

*Sanctus (3rd)*

# WORD

*God speaks to us in scripture reading, preaching and song.*

CHILDREN'S CHAT

Pastor Dan Heim

## FIRST READING: 2 SAMUEL 7:1-11

<sup>1</sup>Now when the king was settled in his house, and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, <sup>2</sup>the king said to the prophet Nathan, "See now, I am living in a house of cedar, but the ark of God stays in a tent." <sup>3</sup>Nathan said to the king, "Go, do all that you have in mind; for the LORD is with you."

<sup>4</sup>But that same night the word of the LORD came to Nathan: <sup>5</sup>Go and tell my servant David: Thus says the LORD: Are you the one to build me a house to live in? <sup>6</sup>I have not lived in a house since the day I brought up the people of Israel from Egypt to this day, but I have been moving about in a tent and a tabernacle. <sup>7</sup>Wherever I have moved about among all the people of Israel, did I ever speak a word with any of the tribal leaders of Israel, whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, saying, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?" <sup>8</sup>Now therefore thus you shall say to my servant David: Thus says the LORD of hosts: I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep to be prince over my people Israel; <sup>9</sup>and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. <sup>10</sup>And I will appoint a place for my people Israel and will plant them, so that they may live in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and evildoers shall afflict them no more, as formerly, <sup>11</sup>from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

PSALM 89: 1-4

*Read responsively*

<sup>1</sup>I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever;  
with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations.

<sup>2</sup>**I declare that your steadfast love is established forever;  
your faithfulness is as firm as the heavens.**

<sup>3</sup>You said, “I have made a covenant with my chosen one,  
I have sworn to my servant David:

<sup>4</sup>**I will establish your descendants forever,  
and build your throne for all generations.’”**

SECOND READING: ROMANS 16:25-27

<sup>25</sup>Now to God who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the proclamation of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages <sup>26</sup>but is now disclosed, and through the prophetic writings is made known to all the Gentiles, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith—<sup>27</sup>to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, to whom be the glory forever! Amen.

Word of God, word of life. **Thanks be to God.**

*Please rise, as you are able.*



## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

Al - le - lu - ia, to  
whom, O Lord, shall we go? You have the words of e -  
ter - nal life. Al - le - lu - ia.

Text: *Evangelical Lutheran Worship*, based on John 6:68 and Psalm 119:41-42; copyright © 2006, admin. Augsburg Fortress  
Music: Aaron David Miller © 2013 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.

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## GOSPEL: LUKE 1:26-38

*Angels Visit*

Spark Children's Bible Page 196

The holy gospel according to Luke. **Glory to you, O Lord.**

<sup>26</sup>In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, <sup>27</sup>to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. <sup>28</sup>And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." <sup>29</sup>But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. <sup>30</sup>The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. <sup>31</sup>And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. <sup>32</sup>He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. <sup>33</sup>He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end." <sup>34</sup>Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" <sup>35</sup>The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God. <sup>36</sup>And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. <sup>37</sup>For nothing will be impossible with God." <sup>38</sup>Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

The gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

*Please be seated.*

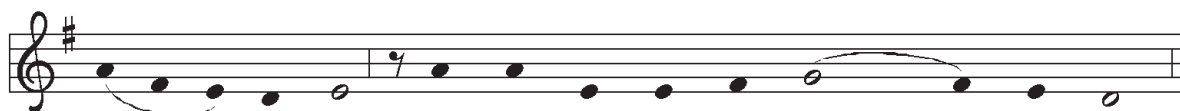
*Please rise, as you are able.*

## HYMN OF THE DAY

## O Come, O Come Emmanuel



1 O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive  
2 O come, O Wis - dom from on high, em - brac - ing all things



Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here  
far and nigh: in strength and beau - ty come and stay;



un - til the Son of God ap - pear. Re-joice! Re-joice!  
teach us your will and guide our way.



Em - man - u - el shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

7 O come, O King of nations, come,  
O Cornerstone that binds in one:  
refresh the hearts that long for you;  
restore the broken, make us new. *Refrain*

8 O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
and ransom captive Israel,  
that mourns in lonely exile here  
until the Son of God appear. *Refrain*

Text: *Psalterium Canticum Catholicarum*, Köln, 1710; tr. composite  
Music: VENI, EMMANUEL, French processional, 15th cent.  
Text sts. 2, 6, 7 © 1997 Augsburg Fortress.

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## APOSTLES' CREED

Let us now confess our faith using the words of the Apostles' Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended to the dead. On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic\* church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*\*catholic: universal*

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

With hope and expectation, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration.

Each petition ends: Merciful God.

Please respond: **receive our prayer.**

Listen to these and all our prayers, O God of hosts, and restore us with your great and everlasting mercy.

**Amen.**

## SHARING OF THE PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you all.

**And also with you.**

*Please be seated*

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Please check the back pages of this bulletin for additional announcements.*

# MEAL

*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus.*

## OFFERING

*At this time, we give our offerings with thanksgiving to God. These offerings support the mission and ministry of Zion, including the care of those in need. To give online, please visit [ZionSA.org](http://ZionSA.org). Children are invited to come forward during the music and place their offerings in the jar to the left of the Chancel area (near the Sacristy door). During the offering music, the pastor sets the table with the elements for Holy Communion. Please know that this is the Lord's table, and all are welcome to receive Communion.*

OFFERING MUSIC	<i>Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus</i> arranged by David Nevue	Sandy Musk
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*Please rise, as you are able.*

## OFFERING PRAYER

Let us pray. God of abundance,  
**we bring before you the precious fruits of your creation, and with them our very lives. Teach us patience and hope as we care for all those in need until the coming of your Son, our Savior and Lord. Amen.**

# GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you. And al - so with you.

Lift up your hearts. We lift them to the Lord.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ. You comforted your people with the promise of the Redeemer, through whom you will also make all things new in the day when he comes to judge the world in righteousness. And so, with all the choirs of angels, with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven, we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

2  
Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow - er and

might, heav'n and earth ring forth your glo - ry. Ho - san -

na! Bless'd is the one who comes in the name of the

Lord. Ho - san - na in the high - est, ho - san - na!

Text prepared by the English Language Liturgical Consultation, 1988, (alt.)  
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Holy One, the beginning and the end, the giver of life: Blessed are you for the birth of creation. Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light. Blessed are you for your promise to your people. Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams. Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will. Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

In the night in which he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks; broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying: Take and eat; this is my body, given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it for all to drink, saying: This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me.

Let us proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.**

With this bread and cup we remember your Word dwelling among us, full of grace and truth. We remember our new birth in his death and resurrection. We look with hope for his coming.

**Come, Lord Jesus.**

Holy God, we long for your Spirit. Come ✠ among us. Bless this meal. May your Word take flesh in us. Awaken your people. Fill us with your light. Bring the gift of peace on earth.

**Come, Holy Spirit.**

All praise and glory are yours, Holy One of Israel, Word of God incarnate, Power of the Most High, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered together by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus has taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.**

## INVITATION

These are the gifts of God for you, the beloved people of God.

*Please be seated.*

## COMMUNION

*Jesus welcomes all to this holy meal! Children who commune should be assisted by adults who are with them. Those who do not wish to receive Holy Communion are invited to come forward to receive a blessing. If you are unable to come forward, please notify an usher and we will bring the sacrament to you. Gluten-free wafers are available; please ask the person serving bread. White grape juice is available in the center of the communion tray for any who are unable to drink wine. After taking Communion, please return to your seat for singing and prayer.*



- 1 What feast of love is of - fered here, what ban-quet come from heav - en?
- 2 What light of truth is of - fered here, what cov - e - nant from heav - en?
- 3 What wine of love is of - fered here, what crim-son drink from heav - en?



What food of ev - er - last - ing life, what gra - cious gift is giv - en?  
 What hope of ev - er - last - ing life, what won - drous word is giv - en?  
 What stream of ev - er - last - ing life, what pre - cious blood is giv - en?



This, this is Christ the king, the bread come down from heav - en.  
 This, this is Christ the king, the sun come down from heav - en.  
 This, this is Christ the king, the sweet - est wine of heav - en.



Oh, taste and see and sing! How sweet the man - na giv - en!  
 Oh, see and hear and sing! The Word of God is giv - en!  
 Oh, taste and see and sing! The Son of God is giv - en!

Text: Delores Dufner, OSB, b. 1939

Music: GREENSLEEVES, English ballad, 16th cent.

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*After communion, we rise and share in blessing and prayer.*



## BLESSING

May the true body and blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ strengthen you and keep you always in God's grace.

**Amen.**

## PRAYER

Let us pray. We give you thanks, almighty God, that you have refreshed us through the healing power of this gift of life. In your mercy, strengthen us through this gift, in faith toward you and in fervent love toward one another; for the sake of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

Section end

# SENDING

*God blesses us and sends us out in peace.*

## BENEDICTION

The Lord bless you and keep you.

The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.

The Lord look upon you with favor and ✠ give you peace.

**Amen.**

SENDING HYMN (next page)

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Christ is near.

**Thanks be to God.**

POSTLUDE	<i>Voluntary on "Antioch" by Alfred Fedak</i>	Sandy Musk
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## AVAILABLE FOR PRAYER

*Immediately following each service, Stephen Ministers are often available to pray with you at the altar rail. All prayers and conversations are confidential.*

1 Joy to the world, the Lord is come! Let earth re -  
 2 Joy to the earth, the Sav - ior reigns! Let all their  
 3 No more let sin and sor - row grow nor thorns in -  
 4 He rules the world with truth and grace and makes the

ceive her king; let ev - 'ry heart pre - pare him  
 songs em - ploy, while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and  
 fest the ground; he comes to make his bless - ings  
 na - tions prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous -

room and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture  
 plains re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing  
 flow far as the curse is found, far as the curse is  
 ness and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his

and heav'n and na - ture sing, and

sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.  
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.  
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.  
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

heav'n and na - ture sing,

Text: Isaac Watts, 1674-1748  
 Music: ANTIOCH, English melody, 18th cent.; arr. Lowell Mason, 1792-1872

**THIS  
WEEK  
AT  
ZION**



*Scan QR code for  
this month's  
calendar*

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**Sunday, December 24**

Worship in person 10am Sanctuary  
Christmas Eve Services  
at 3:00, 5:00 and 7:00pm Sanctuary  
Livestream Christmas Eve Service 5:00pm YouTube

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**December 25 and 26**

Campus closed

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**Wednesday, December 27**

Weight Watchers Mtg 9:30 Church 2

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**Thursday, December 28**

Weight Watchers Mtg 9:30 Church 2  
Stephen Ministry Supervision 7pm MC-1

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**Saturday, December 30**

Weight Watchers Meetings 7:30 & 9:30am Church 2

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**Sunday, December 31**

Worship 10am Sanctuary & YouTube

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**Gifts for Pastors and Staff**

For those wishing to give monetary thank-you gifts to the pastors and staff, a basket is available at each entrance door. For those wishing to donate online, access Zion's "Events, Fundraisers, Special Offerings" portal via this QR code.



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**Dinner Out at Cover 3 Restaurant**

Thursday, January 4 at 6:30pm

Dinner Out invites all adults to meet this month at Cover 3 Restaurant, at the intersection of Huebner Rd and Loop 1604. Come early for socializing; dinner seating is at 6:30.

RSVP by January 2 to Jim or Sandy Chillstrom, or call the church office.

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**Worship Support**

**Altar Guild**

Randalyn Nickel, Karen Umlang

---

**Lay Reader**

Karen Umlang

---

**Communion Servers**

LeShea Clabough & Kevin McGee

---

**Sound**

Scott VanDoren

---

**Ushers**

David Umlang, Bev Rosel  
Bonnie & Brinkley Harrell  
Amy Swanson, Brad McClain  
Linda Hansen

## STAFF CONTACT

*Day Off*

Pastor Kathi Johnson  
kjohanson@ZionSA.org

*Monday*

Pastor Dan Heim  
dheim@ZionSA.org

*Friday*

Suzie Wyatt,  
Administrator  
swyatt@ZionSA.org

*Thursday  
afternoon*

Rob Mikulski,  
Music Director  
rmikulski@ZionSA.org

*Monday*

Sammy Mikulski,  
Theatre Director  
theatre@ZionSA.org

*Monday*

## 2023 CONGREGATION COUNCIL

Bud Halstead *President*  
Chis Jones *Vice President*  
Allen Cockrell *Treasurer*  
Erica Macha *Secretary*  
Carolyn Pfeiffer *At Large*  
David Umlang *At Large*  
Rachel Williams *At Large*  
Pr. Kathi Johnson  
Pr. Dan Heim

## 2024 CONGREGATION COUNCIL

Bud Halstead *President*  
Allen Cockrell *Treasurer*  
*Other Council officers TBD.*  
Erica Macha, Chris Jones,  
David Umlang, Rachel Williams, Shiloh Love, Pr. Kathi Johnson,  
Pr. Dan Heim

## Advent Reflection

by Pastor Kathi Johnson

One last shepherd has joined our scene this week... one more reminder of God's love for all, including the last and the least. Also, though, a reminder that God sent angels to the shepherds so they would be among the first ones to welcome the Christ Child. Not only that, though, the shepherds were among the first to proclaim the good news:

“[The shepherds] went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.”

Let us, too, glorify and praise God for the love shown to us!

Pastor Kathi

## Zion Theatre Group presents



*The* **PLAY**  
*that goes*  
**WRONG**

January 5-7 & 12-14  
[ztg.booktix.com](http://ztg.booktix.com)

Theatre seating tickets available online (use QR or [ZTG.booktix.net](http://ZTG.booktix.net)). Contact Sammy in the church office for dinner seating.





## Zion is a Stephen Ministry Church!

Stephen Ministers Are  
Care-Givers, God Is the Cure-Giver.

The role of a Stephen Minister is to  
give care. They listen, empathize, en-  
courage, pray, and provide emotion-  
al and spiritual support on a weekly

basis to hurting people for as long as the need persists.  
God works in and through them to bring hope and  
healing. If you are feeling lonely, experiencing a cri-  
sis, struggling through a difficult time, or simply find  
yourself stressed by everyday life, talk with one of our  
Stephen Leaders to learn more about Stephen Ministry.  
Our Stephen Ministers are ready to care for you!

To find out more about Stephen Ministry for you or  
someone you know, talk with one of our Stephen Min-  
istry Leaders: 210-688-3090

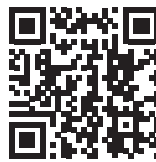
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## Your Generosity Empowers Zion's Ministry

From Sunday morning worship to feeding families for  
the holidays, collecting clothing for local charity or relief  
supplies shipped hundreds of miles, to friendships fos-  
tered worldwide with simple hand stitches.

Because you kindly share your time, lend your skills,  
and support your ministry financially, Zion's impact  
reaches far beyond the four walls of our sanctuary. On  
behalf of everyone we're able to help, thank  
you for your contribution.

For more ways to support Zion's mission,  
scan this QR code.



## OFFICE CONTACT



Mon-Thur 8:30am-5:00pm  
Friday close at 3:00pm



210-688-3090



zion@zionsa.org



Website zionsa.org



Facebook zionsa



Instagram @zionsatx



9944 Leslie Road, 78254

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A-723584.

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DECEMBER 24, 2023  
FOURTH SUNDAY  
OF ADVENT



*Mary finds favor through God's love.*

### DAILY BIBLE READINGS

These passages are related to the Lectionary texts for this Sunday.

<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Luke 1:26-38</b>	<b>The birth of Jesus foretold</b>
<b>Monday</b>	<b>2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16</b>	<b>The Lord's message to David</b>
<b>Tuesday</b>	<b>Romans 16:25-27</b>	<b>Paul's closing prayer</b>
<b>Wednesday</b>	<b>1 Corinthians 13:1-13</b>	<b>The gift of love</b>
<b>Thursday</b>	<b>Psalm 36</b>	<b>Wickedness and God's goodness</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>1 John 4:16-21</b>	<b>God is love</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26</b>	<b>God's promise to David</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>Luke 2:22-40</b>	<b>Jesus presented in the temple</b>

### SCRIPTURE VERSE FOR THIS WEEK

*The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus."* **Luke 1:30-31 (NRSV)**

### PRAYERS AND BLESSING

#### **A Prayer for the Week:**

Everlasting God, your ways are unsearchable and your love never ending; give us the faith to trust in your Son, child of Mary, and Savior of the World. Amen.

#### **Mealtime Prayer:**

Dear God, we thank you for this gift of food; give us faith and courage to speak of your steadfast love to all generations. In Jesus' name, amen. (Psalm 89:1)

#### **A Blessing to Give:**

May God's grace bless you with faith and love.



DECEMBER 24, 2023

HYMN OF THE WEEK 

*Love Has Come*

taking   
faith  
home

WEEKLY MILESTONES 

Take a moment to tell or think about a recent mountain high and/or valley low in your life.

CARING CONVERSATIONS 

Discuss in your home, small group, or use for personal reflections:

- If an angel appeared and told you something, would you believe it? Why or why not?
- How does God's love influence your life?

DEVOTIONS 

*Read:* Luke 1:26-38.

When God's love showers down upon us, it can really turn our lives upside down. That's certainly what happened to Mary. The angel Gabriel announced that she was favored by God and would bear a son who would inherit the throne of King David. Mary was given promises that would seem hard to believe, let alone understand. She was perplexed, to say the least. She had no husband. In her community bearing a child without a husband was nothing less than shameful. Bearing a child in those days was one of the most dangerous events that could happen to a woman. Being ostracized by her neighbors, looking at the prospect of pain, and the possibility of death does not seem like divine favor. This is a story filled with risk, danger, confusion, extreme drama, and surprise. Amid it all, Mary responds with her own act of trust and love and says, "[L]et it be with me according to your word" (v. 38). Mary is the embodiment of a faithful disciple, one who trusts the amazing love of God for her and for all.

*Discuss:* Do you think Mary's response to Gabriel is surprising?

*Pray:* **All knowing God, help us to receive your undeserved kindness with courage and love through Jesus Christ, child of Mary, your Son and our Savior. Amen.**

SERVICE 

Jesus calls us to serve our neighbor in love. Based on the Daily Bible Readings and theme for this week, how can you share the good news of Jesus' birth with someone?

RITUALS AND TRADITIONS 

The scripture readings during Advent point to Jesus. This week we light all four candles on the Advent wreath. The fourth candle is the candle of love. Psalm 89 is a praise song to God for all creation: "I will sing of your steadfast love, O LORD, forever; with my mouth I will proclaim your faithfulness to all generations." Think or talk about the ways we respond to God's great love for us through Jesus.

Light the first candle of hope, the second candle of peace, the third candle of joy, and the fourth candle of love and say: "**The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.**" (John 1:5)



In addition to *Taking Faith Home*, celebrate milestones in your daily life as an effective faith formation tool. Go to: [www.milestonesministry.org](http://www.milestonesministry.org)