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WELCOME TO MT. ZION! If this is your first time with us, please stop by the Welcome Center for a gift. We're so glad you're here today!

UPCOMING EVENTS

PARENTS' NIGHT OUT: CHRISTMAS EDITION | Friday, December 19, 5PM-9PM at Mt. Zion

Parents, need a *silent night*? Drop your kids off for an evening of fun while you enjoy a little peace on earth! Kids will enjoy games, crafts, movies — and we'll handle dinner, so you don't have to — while you finish last-minute shopping, wrapping, or simply take a well-deserved break. The event is free, and you can drop the kids off anytime between 5PM and 9PM. Sign up in the Foyer.

CHRISTMAS CAROL SING | Sunday, December 21, 9AM-9:40AM in the Chapel

All are welcome to celebrate the season as we sing many beloved sacred Christmas carols.

BLUE CHRISTMAS | Sunday, December 21, 6PM in the Chapel

Our Blue Christmas service offers a time of reflection for anyone carrying grief, sadness, or loneliness during the holiday season. On the longest night of the year, we gather to be reminded that God is good, God is strong, and God is near. We are not alone—and even in the darkness, we have every reason to hold on to hope.

CHRISTMAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICES | Wednesday, December 24, 4PM & 7PM

Invite your friends and family to worship as we gather for carols, a hope-filled message, traditional candlelighting, and communion, declaring that hope has come in Jesus, the Savior and Light of the World!

Christmas Eve Offering: Christmas is a season of giving in remembrance of what God has given to us in the gift of Jesus. We celebrate at Mt. Zion by taking an offering to bless those around us in need. This year's offering will be divided in three ways:

- **Local:** Lunch debt is growing at some of our local schools as many families are out of work or not being paid. We will again bless families at Fairbrook Elementary School by paying down lunch debt.
- **National:** Our newly adopted church plant, Rosemont Christian Church, has begun a campaign to renovate their older building. This is a great opportunity to begin our relationship with them by blessing them in an unexpected way.
- **Global:** The persecution of Christians has increased worldwide, yet the church is growing where Christianity is illegal. Global Catalytic Ministries supports church planters in these nations, training disciples in 71 countries—focusing on former Muslims in hostile regions—to evangelize neighbors and build the underground church in their home countries.

A special love-offering envelope was recently mailed for this one-time offering on Christmas Eve. Please place it in the offering plate on Christmas Eve. Online giving will also be available on Christmas Eve for those who prefer to give electronically.

FAMILY COMMUNION & PRAYER | Wednesday, December 31, 4PM-5PM & 7PM-8PM

We invite you and your family to join us on New Year's Eve for a special time of communion and prayer. Pastors and elders will be available to serve communion and pray with each family individually. This is a come-and-go observance, so you're welcome to stop in at any point during the open hours. You do not need to arrive at the beginning of either hour, and you will not stay for the full duration—your visit will be a short but meaningful time for your family to receive communion and be prayed for. As we close out the year and prepare our hearts for the one ahead, we welcome you to share this sacred time with us.

RENU YOUTH NEW YEAR'S EVE LOCK-IN | Wednesday, December 31-Thursdays, January 1, 8PM-6AM

Students in grades 6–12 are invited to ring in the New Year at our all-night RENU Youth Lock-In right here at Mt. Zion. We'll have silent disco, Nerf wars, glow-in-the-dark activities, great food, and nonstop games. Bring a friend and kick off the new year with us!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **CONGREGATIONAL VOTE | Today, immediately following the worship service**
MTZ members will vote on the proposed 2026 budget and nominees for church leadership. Two Elders are needed; nominees are John Coulter, Lee Monroe, and Daryl Smith. Two Deacons are needed; nominees are Andy Betts and Phil Blosser. One Deaconess is needed; the nominee is Cathy Scholz. For unopposed candidates, members will vote to approve or disapprove the candidate.
- **CAREGIVER SUPPORT GROUP | Next meeting - Thursday, January 8, 2PM-4PM**
Being a caregiver can be physically, mentally, and spiritually exhausting. This group offers encouragement, conversation, and prayer with others walking a similar journey. Our study resource will be *The Heart of the Caregiver*, a scripture-based guide for caregivers.
- **WOMEN'S BOOK CLUB | Thursday, January 8, 6PM**
Ladies, join us as we discuss our Book of the Month, *Widow of Gettysburg* by Jocelyn Green.
- **MEN'S ALLIANCE | Mondays, 6:30PM (MTZ Parking Lot)**
A weekly 30-minute outdoor workout + a 30-minute fireside devotional for men of all fitness levels. Learn more at mensalliancetribe.com/tribes/shepherd
- **RENU YOUTH (6th-12th) | 6PM-8PM (doors open at 6PM) – Christmas Party (December 17)**
Middle school & high school students have fun and learn more about Jesus.
- **AWANA (Pre-K-5th) | 6:30PM-8PM (doors open at 6PM) – Christmas Party (December 17)**
A fun and engaging way for kids to build Bible knowledge and lifelong faith.

SERMON NOTES

UNEXPECTED: THE PLACE WE DIDN'T EXPECT

Pastor Vance Weeks | Matthew 2:1-11

Expected: Bethlehem fulfilled prophecy and connected the Messiah to David.

- **UNEXPECTED:** Bethlehem did not fulfill the prestige expected of the Messiah.

Expected: The Messiah would be the Good Shepherd.

- **UNEXPECTED:** The Messiah would be the Lamb of God.

Expected: The Messiah would be a King like David.

- **UNEXPECTED:** The Messiah would be more like David the shepherd than David the King.

Why does Jesus need to be King?

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