



**The Gathering**

**Zion Presbyterian Church**

January 2026

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*

**2 Corinthians 5:17**



Christmas celebrations began with the first Advent service at Mermaid church and then we held the angel tree service at Zion remembering departed loved ones. The impromptu pageant was held early on Christmas Eve and in the evening, the choir sang the story beautifully into our hearts.



## John's Thoughts

**What's it all about?** It starts in early fall... the big box storekeepers holding off just long enough for the poppies to be laid to rest... and then, SLAM! ... It hits us with a wallop! Advertisements for Christmas shopping, early Black Friday specials, Family and Friends shopping offers, flyers in the mailbox, and the hustle of Christmas has begun. How exciting! But, what's it all about?

Christmas baking, concerts, craft sales, carols, lights, Christmas trees, Christmas Eve, Christmas morning, presents, turkey dinner...and the celebrations go on... What a beautiful time of year...for some folks, but not everyone. For some folks it's a sad time of year, but in a way, it brings on a kind of a sadness that reminds us of happy times past, spent with loved ones who have gone on. Hymns like "Oh Holy Night" and "Silent Night" seem comforting in a special kind of way. Then comes January...long, cold, and lonely January... Christmas long past... So... what's it all about?

The words to the anthem "It's About the Cross", that our choir has sung tells the story in a way that may be worth a thought. See what you think?? "

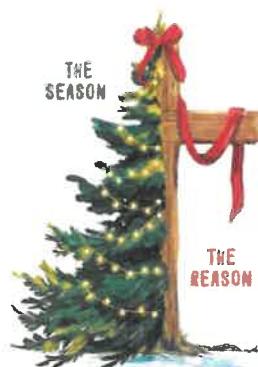
*(You can listen to the Ball Brothers sing it if you google "It's about the Cross". Source: Musixmatch by Jamie Statema)*

It's not just about the manger  
Where the baby lay  
It's not all about the angels  
Who sing for him that day  
It's not all about the shepherds  
Or the bright and shining star  
It's not all about the wise men  
Who travelled from afar  
It's about the cross  
It's about my sin  
It's about how Jesus came to be born once  
So that we could be born again  
It's about the stone  
That was rolled away  
So that you and I could have real life someday  
It's about the cross  
It's not just about the good things  
In this life I've done  
It's not all about the treasures  
Or the trophies that I've won  
It's not about the righteousness  
That I've found within  
It's all about His precious blood  
That saved me from my sin

It's about the cross  
It's about my sin  
It's about how Jesus came to be born once  
So that we could be born again

It's about the stone  
That was rolled away  
So that you and I could have real life someday  
It's about the cross  
The beginning of the story  
Is wonderful and great  
But it's the ending that can save you  
And that's why we celebrate  
It's about the cross  
It's about my sin  
It's about how Jesus came to be born once  
So that we could be born again  
It's about God's love  
Nailed to a tree  
It's about how every drop of blood  
That flowed from Him when it should have been me  
It's about the stone  
That was rolled away  
So that you and I could have real life someday  
So that you and I could have real life someday  
It's about the cross (it's about the cross)  
It's about the cross  
It's about the cross

*May you feel God's love, peace,  
hope, joy and grace in 2020 and  
may you be drawn closer to the  
Cross.*





Thanks to the kitchen crew for the Prince Street Advent service at Zion, the volunteers who helped prepare the Seniors' Tea for which there was a large turnout and the MacDonalda

s who added cheer with their Christmas tartan. Congratulations to the wardrobe crew who provided outfits for the pageant cast and the volunteers who played a part. Well done!

## Liz's Corner

Greetings Brothers and Sisters! Happy New Year to you all dear friends!!

The year is 2026! It is good to know that our lives are in God's hands! What His plans for us are, we can't know. We each are travelling on our God given path and have persevered thus far with the knowledge that we, each one, has never been alone. Not for one second! Our personal journeys are known to Him and He continues with His message as true and as miraculous as it was to His shepherds, angels, family, and friends in days of old and unto this very day - Fear Not! I love you! Pour out your heart to me and I will be your comforter! Hope, Peace, Joy and Love - ours for the asking! Miraculous! Hallelujah!!

Will you pray with me now? Father, in this new year we pray for peace in our hearts, peace in our communities, our country, and peace in this world you gave us to protect and love. Thank you for your unfailing love for us, your blessings and goodness. Thank you for your faithfulness to guide us and see us through times of uncertainty, for lifting us up and never letting us go. We lay before you all that weighs heavy on our hearts. Forgive us our sins Lord. We pray for our loved ones - may this be the year those who do not know of your love and grace find salvation and hope. Amen.

When people say that the only thing constant in life is change, they are partly right. I believe that the only thing constant in life is the Spirit of God, who can exact any change possible.

This year, I'm praying all mankind will look past greed and power and embrace our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. As the Missionary Paul said;

*In Galatians 5:22-23. But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.*

*In Ephesians 2: 20-22. What a foundation you stand on now: the apostles and the prophets; and the cornerstone of the building is Jesus Christ himself. We who believe are carefully joined together with Christ as parts of a beautiful constantly growing temple for God. And you also are joined with him and with each other by the Spirit and are part of this dwelling place of God.*

*In Romans 8: 31. What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is on our side, who can ever be against us?*

*In Romans 8: 38-39. And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God's love. Neither death nor life neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow - not even the powers of hell can separate us from God's love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below - indeed nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

The quotations are from my bible of choice The New Living Illustrated.

Godspeed!

Elizabeth Ferguson

The members of the creative team at The Gathering wish all our readers near and far, joy and peace in the New Year. We are always glad to hear your comments and suggestions and when you have finished reading your copy of the newsletter, pass it on to a friend or relative so they can get to know us.

## A Word from Evan

I couldn't tell you who coined the phrase "it's the thought that counts" about gift-giving, but they must have had some special ability to know exactly what gifts all their friends and family wanted. There are some people in this world who are impossible to find the perfect gift for, particularly those who refuse to give hints and insist that they "already have everything I could ever want." There's just not enough thought in my head to go around.

On the other hand, there are people who are so easy to find the perfect gift for that it takes no thought at all. Maybe they give blatant hints, or have really obvious hobbies and interests. The easiest people to give gifts to are the ones who want the same thing every year and are thrilled with it every time. For example, those odd ducks who say they want socks for Christmas and are, by all appearances, absolutely thrilled to get said socks.

God is certainly the undisputed champion of gift-giving. You could argue that being all-knowing and all-powerful is cheating a little bit, but when the gifts are this good, you would have to be a real Grinch to quibble about it.

*"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulders: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace."* (Isaiah 9:6, NIV)

Of all the gifts that are given at Christmas every year, what can top this one? The absolute master of all creation, comes to us in the form of a tiny baby, born for our salvation. I've been fortunate enough throughout my life to receive a number of truly memorable gifts, gifts that I might be tempted to call perfect. None of them, not a single one, can compare to the gift given to you and me by God. The birth of Jesus Christ is a gift given to us not just at Christmas or our birthdays, but a gift of perfect love that is given in every moment of our being, now and eternally.

The best part of all might be that God is incredibly easy to find the perfect gift for. Not only does He give the perfect gift, but He is happy to tell us exactly what kind of gift He wants to receive. It was Jesus, God's gift, who told us. While teaching one day, Christ was asked which was the most important of God's commandments.

*"Jesus replied: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.'" (Matthew 22:37, NIV)*

If only everyone was so easy to find a gift for. No standing in a check-out line or waiting for a package to be delivered, no agonising mental debate over whether the sock lover actually has too many socks. Since there is no limit to the love that God has given to us, we in turn can give God all the love He wants and so richly deserves; all the love we have and more.

So, did you get or give anything good for Christmas?



## Angels among us

Already in November, I am happy to welcome the early outdoor displays of cheerful Christmas lights, air-filled Santas and nativity scenes announcing hope and joy to the world (as a contrast to the gloom of witches and tombstones at Hallowe'en!). The arrival of our first snowfall is a signal for kids of all ages to fall happily backwards into those pure white drifts and joyfully create angels with their arms and legs. When I read about the angels in the Bible, I tend to view them as “*supporting cast*” rather than “*leading men*”, but after studying them, I have changed my mind.

The word “angel” appears in the Bible over 270 times and a variety of angel activity is recorded in both the old and the new testaments. Some angel moments are likely more familiar to you than others. The earliest mention of an angel is the one who comforts Hagar in the desert (Genesis 16 v 7) and all through scripture, they appear unexpectedly as one of God’s ways to become actively involved in the earthly lives of His children. He uses them as messengers, guides and protectors. And when it was time in God’s plan to send His son among us, He kept them busy! The angel Gabriel is sent to Zechariah to announce that his wife, Elizabeth will bear a son, John, who will prepare the way for the Lord. Then he is sent to Mary to tell her she will have a son. Another comes in dreams to her fiancé, Joseph, to put his mind to rest about marrying her, then to warn him to flee with the child to Egypt and save him from Herod and finally tells him when it is safe to return to Israel after Herod dies. An angel tells the shepherds near Bethlehem about the saviour’s birth and a multitude of them sing about it from the heavens. One warns the three kings to head back home by a different route and avoid Herod, thus providing protection for our Saviour. They are all **crucial players** in the nativity story.

Only three of the angels are named in scripture – Michael, Gabriel and Lucifer, but there are countless others as we are told in Hebrews 12 v 11; *“But you have come to Mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels, in joyful assembly to the church of the first born whose names are written in heaven”*. And in Matthew 26 v 53 Jesus himself provides valuable comforting assurance that indeed, multitudes of angels in heaven exist when, at the time of his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, he says to Peter, *“Do you think that I cannot appeal to my Father and He will at once send me more than twelve legions of angels?”* (12 legions is 72,000!)

Angels were never far away from Jesus during his ministry. After spending 40 days in the wilderness in preparation for it, Jesus is looked after by angels. Suffering and lonely in the Garden of Gethsemane, he is supported by an angel not by friends. And angels are present at his resurrection - they roll away the stone from the tomb then, appearing as men in dazzling white, they tell the women *“He is risen!”* Finally, two angels stand beside the disciples as Jesus ascends into heaven promising his return in the same manner. *“Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken up from you into heaven will come back in the same way as you have seen him go into heaven.”* (Acts 1 v 11). As players in the drama directed by God among us, they sometimes have the best lines!

Maybe we should pay more attention to what angels say, do and sing in the Bible because they are an active cast of worshippers and warriors in God’s divine army fighting against evil. I take great comfort in reading Psalm 91 v 11,12 that, *“He will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways; they will lift you up in their hands so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.”* Yes, they are indeed among us! Thanks be to God for that.

Joan Cumming



## The Last Word - Rev Kirk MacLeod

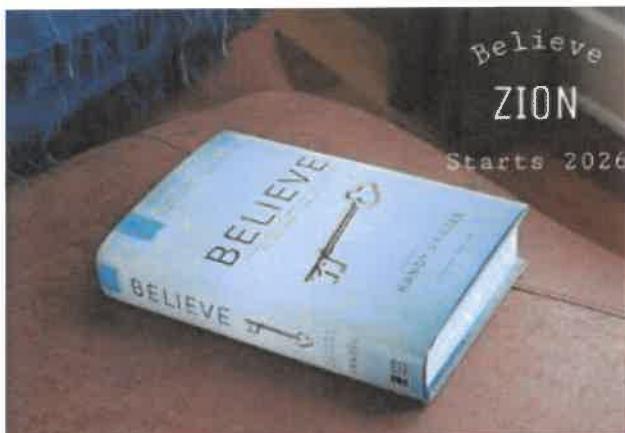
### Believe

It's one thing to know what you believe. It's another to live out that belief. And still another for that active faith to transform us or make us more Christ-like. Some of you might remember Rev Doug doing the "The Story" before COVID which was a program to help us get a bird's eye view of the Biblical story. Following "The Story" was "Believe." Once we know the story, how do we think, act and become more like Jesus? The Believe series never happened, because COVID happened. Books were purchased but sat on the library shelves and in the former "ladies parlour," that is until now.

Beginning in January we are going to learn together what it means to "believe." From the youngest to the oldest - Sunday School, Sunday worship and in small groups we are going to spend 30 weeks together with our Believe Books (available from the office for \$10) looking at the 10 key beliefs of the Christian faith (think), 10 key practices of a Jesus-follower (act), and finally 10 key virtues of a person who is becoming more like Jesus (be).

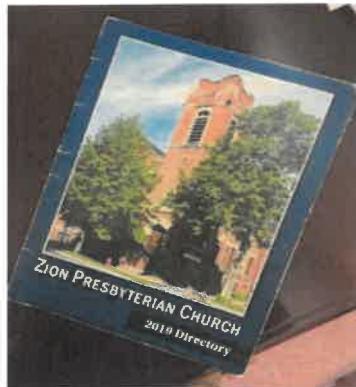
We are excited for this church-wide program which everyone will be a part of. But we also hope that it will be more than just something on a Sunday morning in person or online. We hope you will be reading (and re-reading) through the book each day, and for those who are able, to be part of one of our small groups as we dig deeper. Our regular two groups will be happening on Tuesday evenings and Thursday mornings at the church but we also hope to expand our small group ministry with additional home groups to even offer more opportunities for others to be involved. (If you are interested in hosting, please speak with Kirk or Allyson).

If you are receiving the Gathering and you would like a book, please let us know by calling the church office. If you aren't able to watch our service online, please let us know and we would like to help you stay better connected to Zion. For those who do follow us each Sunday, we want to say, "Thank you for joining us. You are an important part of our church family." Everything begins the week of January 11 as together we think, act and become more like Jesus.



If you would like a visit from one of our ministers, call the church office at 902 566 5363. If you still want to contribute your photograph to the directory or need to have your picture taken, call the office to arrange.

Thanks to all who contributed to this edition of The Gathering. Could any members of the congregation who sit on the side of the church near the piano take pictures of special music performances and send them to me at [gatheringinfo2025@gmail.com](mailto:gatheringinfo2025@gmail.com) ...I sit too far away to get good ones with my phone! Joan



Candles glow as the choir ends the Christmas Eve worship with Silent Night.

## Around the Church

**Choir rehearsals** begin on January 7 at 7pm and then Legato and Marcato choirs at 6.30pm from the 14<sup>th</sup>.

**Prayer Group** starts up on the 13<sup>th</sup> at 10 am. Your requests for prayer are welcome and kept confidential.

**Friends of Faith** are meeting monthly starting January 22 at 1 pm. Come join us for the fellowship.

**Bible Study** resumes on Tuesday evenings at 7 and Thursday mornings at 10am. Believe!

Please check the calendar for all our other activities and notices of meetings. Information from group leaders about programs and events is always welcome—we love to hear and have pictures of you in action.

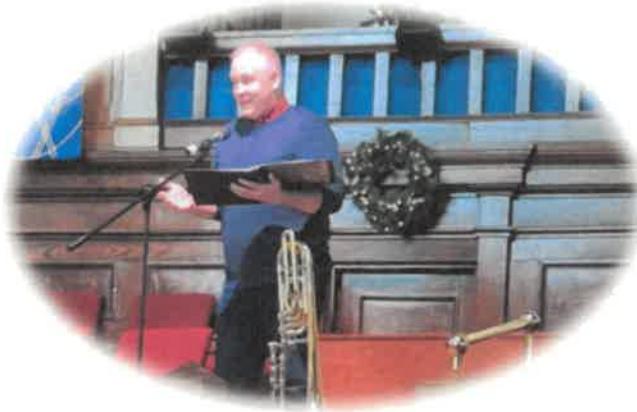
**Zion congregational meeting** will be held on **Sunday, February 15, 2026** after the morning service. Plan to be there!



Thanks to those who gave time and energy to help others. Hundreds of pairs of mittens were donated by our Knitters group and friends. 25 hampers were filled to give to needy families over Christmas, and work continued on the elevator shaft. The entrance to the former office has disappeared and the shaft goes up and down waiting for the machinery to arrive in January. Inauguration day will be announced!



## *Sing We now of Christmas*



Thanks to director Faye Barrett and the choir for adding so much joy to our experience of the events in Bethlehem long ago. For the final Sunday service of the year, the choir wore festive outfits instead of gowns and accompanied the singing with a variety of instruments - violin, trombone, tambourine, drums, triangle and bell chimes. Rev. Doug returned to Zion to lead the worship. If you missed the service, take the time to watch it on our website. You will enjoy it.

# January 2026 at Zion Presbyterian Church

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		Zion's Annual Congregational Meeting will Be held on Sunday, February 15, 2026 following the worship service			1	2
	4 10:30 am Worship, Children's Ministries 11:30 Fellowship (last day for 2025 Donations)				8 Choir Ministry 2 pm Prince Edward Home	9 10
11 10:30 am Worship, Children's Ministries 11:30 Fellowship	5 6:30 pm Stewardship Committee	6 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	7 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	14 6:30-Legato Choir 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	15 9:30 am Social Time 10 am Bible Study 6:30 pm Board of Trustees Meeting	16 17
18 10:30 am Worship, Children's Ministries 11:30 Fellowship	19 All written & Financial Reports for the Annual Report are due today Email to dwhite@zionpres.org	20 10 am Prayer Group 12:00 noon—First Place for Health Group 6:30 pm Social Time 7 pm Bible Study	21 6:30-Marcato Choir 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	22 9:30 am Social Time 10 am Bible Study 1:00 pm—Friends of Faith 6:30 pm Session	23	24
25 10:30 am Worship, Children's Ministries 11:30 Fellowship	26 10 am Prayer Group 12:00 noon—First Place for Health Group 6:30 pm Social Time 7 pm Bible Study	27 6:30-Legato Choir 7-8:30 pm Sanctuary Choir	28 9:30 am Social Time 10 am Bible Study	29	30	31