

The 4th Sunday of Advent

December 21, 2025

9:00 a.m.

+ Indicates those times when all who are able may stand.

Bold indicates congregational response.

Ringing of the Bell

Welcome & Announcements

Prelude *“O Come, All Ye Faithful”* arr. Smith

Call to Worship

To love is the greatest gift bestowed upon us. It is a surrender to God’s holy power.

God loves us, despite all our mistakes, so we pray for the patience of hope!

To be loved by God is the right of every living thing. This love is the sun and the rain, it is the beginning and end of all.

God loves us even when we neglect our neighbors, so we pray for the strength to bring peace.

God’s love is always a promise and a responsibility, and we are given this love freely. God demands nothing from us, yet knows we are capable of greatness.

God loves us in the midst of destruction and despair, so we pray to share a vision of joy.

Love is a sacred vow God has made to us, a rainbow in the sky, a baby in the manger.

God loves us just as we are, and we gives thank and whisper amen.

Gathering Prayer

Let us pray.

Emmanuel, we come today with arms wide open, ready to meet your precious son. Your love for us is so full that you sent a fragile babe to share your holy word, knowing that he would face human pain. Open us, God! Prepare us for his coming, that we may be messengers of your abundant love, and act to ease the suffering of all. Amen.

First Reading of Scripture

Psalm 130 NRSVUE

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church...

Thanks be to God!

+ Opening Hymn No. 196 *“In the Bleak Midwinter”*

Lighting the Candle of Love

Josh, Bronwen, Sutton, Nate & Nalee Birke

Today, we light the Candle of Love. Over the past few weeks, we have sparked the light of hope, peace, and joy. Now, we come to love, which binds all of these together. Each strand is braided gently into an image of God who protects, encourages, and endures. We cannot look upon the face of God, but we can experience this love every time we experience hope, peace, and joy. We are not above suffering, but God promises, even in the midst of despair, love will pour down upon us. Just as we await the birth of our savior in the manger, God waits on us, watches over us, and sends us out into the world to do as Jesus did – to care for our neighbors, to give freely to those in need, to call out tyranny, to face down injustice –knowing that God is with us.

We are loved. We are love. We will love.

Giving from Our Hearts



It is the generosity of the friends and members of this church which supports this ministry. While the ministry at Zion is sustained by more than dollars and cents, the monetary giving is vital to the work we do. We give thanks for all who have supported Zion over the years. For those contributing financially, there is an offering plate just outside the sanctuary or you can donate online through the online giving button at zionunion.org.

+ Doxology

**Praise God from whom all blessings flow; praise God, all creatures here below;
Praise God above, ye heavenly host: praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.**

+ Prayer of Dedication

Love and Light of the world, we give you thanks for these gifts. We give you thanks for the privilege of generosity. We give you thanks for the ability to share your divine love in a tangible form with our siblings around the world. Help us to remember, as we await Christ's birth, to give more generously than we receive, knowing we will always be rich in your abundant love. Amen.

Litany for Blue Christmas

We pray for those who grieve the loss of loved ones, jobs, stability, certainty, or hope; who long for the day when the pain does not overwhelm and the sorrow comes in trickles instead of torrents.

We wait in our grief, and in our grief, God waits with us.

We pray for those who suffer under corporations, politicians, laws, and systems; who long for the day when their work is fairly compensated, their rest is protected, and their dignity is secure.

We wait in our suffering, and in our suffering, God waits with us.

We pray for those who live surrounded by violence; who long for the day when their home, neighborhood, city, or nation is no longer a place of fear and division, but, instead, a place of flourishing and care.

We wait in our distress, and in our distress, God waits with us.

We pray for those overwhelmed with worry and dread; who long for the day when peace will reign in our bodies, our families, our community, and our world.

We wait in our worry, and in our distress, God waits with us.

Loving God who came to dwell among us, fill our hearts with your loving presence. Draw us together in your love. Help us cling to the truth that in our grief, our pain, our distress, and our worry, we are not alone.

God is with us, and the Spirit binds us together in the Body of Christ, that we may be agents of love, comfort, and hope to one another and all the world. Amen.

Second Reading of Scripture

Psalm 88 CEB

Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church...

Thanks be to God!

Anthem

“Behold the Child of Bethlehem”

Martin

Chancel Choir

Sermon

Pastoral Prayer

The Prayer of Our Savior

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 debts as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

+ Closing Hymn No. 154

“O Come, O Come, Emmanuel”

+ Benediction

+ Postlude

“Petite Noel”

Simone

Originally published by *Discipleship Ministries*. Republished with permission by *ResourceUMC*.
<https://www.resourceumc.org/en/content/blue-christmas-resources-for-healing-and-grace>

Let It Be Deep: Service Prayers for the Fourth Sunday of Advent Year A was written by Maria Mankin. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/advent-4a-december-21/>

Zion United Church of Christ, 115 S. Washington Ave., Union, MO 63084-1849

Home Page address is: www.zionunion.org

Office Hours: Monday-Friday—8:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. (closed Tuesdays)

Church Office (636) 583-2814

Pastor: Rev. Nicholas Knoblauch

Minister to Youth & Families: Alysha Petry

Organist: Brenda Herring

Music Director: Dr. Karen Stafford

Administrative Assistant: Connie Thompson

Coordinator of Elementary Youth: Mandy Frick

Council President: Fern Dewert

Church Custodian: Joy Bradley

We commit ourselves...

to worship God

to form faithful followers of Jesus

and to care for our wider community.

We care as Christ cares.



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December 21, 2025 + 9:00 a.m.

Zion United Church of Christ

Union, Missouri

Please take the Sunday News home with you for information and happenings during the week at Zion Church.

SUNDAY NEWS

DECEMBER 21, 2025

Serving This Morning

Liturgist: Richard Young

Ushers: Susan Merlino & Karen Tucker Greeter: Maxine Harrison
Sound Tech: Jason Dewert Camera Techs: Blake & Camden Dewert
Advent Candlelighters: Josh, Bronwen, Sutton, Nate & Nalee Birke
(Hearing devices are available if needed. Please ask an usher for one.)

Usher Dismissal - An usher will dismiss you by row at the conclusion of the service. They will begin at the front.

2026 Offering Envelopes are now available in the upper commons. If you do not have offering envelopes and would like either weekly or monthly, please contact the church office.

Christmas Fund for Veterans of the Cross - The Christmas Fund has been caring for active and retired clergy and lay employees of the UCC for over 100 years. It provides emergency grants, helps with health premiums and Christmas 'thank you' gift checks each December to lower-income retirees. The Christmas Fund is managed by the Pension Boards of the UCC. Offering envelopes were provided in the December newsletter for your gifts; additional envelopes can be found next to the offering plate in the narthex.

Christmas Offering - This year's Christmas offering will be donated to the Missouri tornado victims and Bread for the World. Missouri residents are still dealing with the destruction the tornadoes left that swept through the area in the spring. Bread for the World is an organization that helps deal with hunger in the U.S. and around the world. Christmas offering envelopes are available in your offering envelope boxes and extra envelopes are next to the offering plate in the narthex.

On Our List For Prayers

Health and Healing:

Jim Doehring	Phyllis Olson	Carolyn Donoho	Charlotte Ellison
Brenda Viehland	Kim Yenser	Kevin Vorderbruegge	Myrt Dunigan
Hettie Becker	Bruce Crane (at New Haven Care Center)		
Anne Parker (at Aspen Valley Fox Crest in Washington)	Chris Branch (niece of Gerry Hoelscher)		
Sharon Waldrop (friend of Jim Doehring)	Darlene Farrell (sister of Charlotte Ellison)		
Mitch Angell (friend of Charlotte Ellison)	Bill Stolle (friend of Jim Doehring)		
Tammy Wettling (friend of Charlotte Ellison)	Eric Heitman (nephew of Jim Doehring)		
Heather Gooch (great niece of Charlotte Ellison)	S (Karen Stafford's CASA buddy)		
Carol Mossoney (mother of Dan Mossoney)	Bob Truel (husband of Shirley Truel)		
Heather Frederick (niece of Marilyn Freiermuth)	Nancy McKenzie (sister of Vicki Hooper)		
Josh & Tricia Pardee-Jacka (friends of Charlotte Ellison)	Mike Bailey (husband of Leslie Bailey)		
Cindy Roach (friend of Charlotte Ellison)	Glenda Foster (friend of Charlotte Ellison)		
Vanessa Dobsch (niece of Charlotte Ellison)	Mary Dobsch (sister of Charlotte Ellison)		
Aubrey Reed (granddaughter of Charlotte Ellison)	Pat Pappas (sister of Jim Doehring)		
Marilyn Fish (aunt of Carla Kilgore)			

Church Family Undergoing Cancer Treatment:

Linda Kroeter	Jake McNeil (member of Zion & son of Sarah Davenport)
Susie Andell	Ronald Dobsch (nephew of Charlotte Ellison)
Sarah Reed (daughter-in-law of Charlotte Ellison)	Cynthia Johnson (friend of Karen Stafford)
Kim Gallagher (friend of Chris & Dawn Robinson)	Trish Kennedy (friend of Charlotte Ellison)
Allen Coffman (friend of Shawn Pehle)	Marissa Schollenberger (friend of Tom & Gayle Williams)
Aaron Dixon (nephew of Dan Mossoney)	Mike Meyer (friend of Mandy Frick)
Brenda (friend of Hettie Becker)	Britt Fassler (daughter of Nancy Kossmann)
Willie Beckett (nephew of Vicki Hooper)	Dasha Musante (granddaughter of Marilyn Stahlman)
Erica Sterling (friend of Amy Dewert)	Sammie Baker (friend of Brenda Viehland)
Sharon Birke (sister of Ron Griffin)	

Various Concerns:

Prayer for our country and those actively serving:

Aviation Structural Mechanic 3rd Class Hunter Grafrath (son of Lindsay & Greg Traffas, grandson of Mike & Lynne Elliott)
Ross Groenke (son of Cindy & Dale Groenke)

Christian Education/Faith Quest/Youth News

This Morning – All Sunday School classes meet in the fellowship hall for our Intergenerational Sunday School hour. We will be assembling winter care packages for the Little Free Pantry.

Please Note – There will be NO Faith Quest next Sunday, December 28th.

Church Calendar – December 21, 2025 to December 28, 2025

Today -	The 4th Sunday of Advent 9:00 a.m. Worship 10:00 a.m. Fellowship Hour/Christian Education Hour
Wed., Dec. 24 -	6:30 p.m. Christmas Eve Candlelight Service
Thurs., Dec. 25	Christmas Day Church Offices will be closed
Fri., Dec. 26 -	Church Offices will be closed 7:00 p.m. Fellowship Hall in use
Next Sun., Dec. 28 -	The 1st Sunday of Advent 9:00 a.m. Worship 10:00 a.m. Fellowship Hour

Christmas Eve Service - Wed., Dec. 24 – Christmas Eve Service with Candlelight begins at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, December 24th.

Green Team LOGOS Adult Education Forum – Wed., Jan. 7 – The Green Team invites everyone to attend a forum about Missouri waterways on Wednesday, January 7, at 5pm. Cheri Becker from the Department of Conservation will share information about Missouri's vast watersheds and ways we can care for them. Following the presentation, dinner will be served at 6pm. Please RSVP for dinner by emailing Alysha at apetry@zionunion.org or calling the church office.

A Request from the Quilters – Zion Quilters are asking if you or anyone you know has quilts that need to be quilted to please contact the church office or one of the quilters. Thank you!

Hope Ranch of Missouri will be accepting several new teen girls as residents in the next few weeks. Needed supplies include: shampoo and conditioner, deodorant, body wash or bar soap, feminine hygiene products, facial tissue toilet paper, toothbrushes, toothpaste, hair brushes. In addition, household cleaning supplies are needed to replenish stores to save money for other uses. Supplies include: paper towels, microfiber cleaning cloths, Mr. Clean kitchen sponges, Dawn dish soap, dishwasher tables, rinse aid for dishwashers, all-purpose cleaner, laundry detergent, dryer sheets, Swiffer refills, 33-gal trash bags, windex, toilet bowl cleaner. Please consider a donation of the above items and drop them off at the church office. Thank you!

Little Food Pantry – Thank you for the great support in keeping the Little Food Pantry going! A list of the most needed items is posted on the bulletin board in the lower commons. Monetary donations can also be given – contact the church office.

Little Free Library – Just a reminder that Zion has a Little Free Library located close to the corner of Washington and Springfield Avenue. If you have any gently used adult/children's books please feel free to drop them in the free library or drop them off in the church office. Thank you!

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