

WHAT CHILD IS THIS?



Serve & Enrich
Zion United Church
of Christ

Our Mission: United by Christ's loving embrace, a welcoming light in an unsure world, we serve and enrich the community and provide a safe gathering space for fellowship, spiritual growth, and self-exploration.

Our Vision: Transforming and caring for our community through Christ's love.

Pastor: Sarah Frische-Mouri Hannigan

Organist: Martha Main

Bell Choir Director: Vivian Thomas

Office Manager: Michael Brown

Custodians: Anita and Greg Law

Scripture Reader: Collin Bennington

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December 21, 2025 – The 3rd and 4th Sundays of Advent

Gathering—Like the iconic figures gathered around the Christ Child in our nativity scenes, we gather together because we want to know Jesus more as we seek to bring his Reign of Hope, Peace, Joy, and Love on earth.

Prelude

Advent Wreath Lighting

Dennis, Linda, Paul, and Cassidy Frische-Mouri

Please join us in singing the “What Child Is This” when prompted (lyrics on screen).

***Gathering Song**

Angels We Have Heard on High, 188

Prayer of Invocation—Here, at the nativity of your birth, give us the courage to face this moment with an uncanny joy. Open us to new understandings of the unfolding story of your presence among us. Show us how to praise you even when songs and carols feel empty. We pray in the name of the Child, the One Who Uplifts our hearts and lives.

The Lord’s Prayer (unison)—**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.**

Choir

Scripture – Luke 1:39-55*Collin Bennington and Kaylee Gephart-Kile*

Six months later, the angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a young woman named Mary; she was engaged to a man named Joseph, of the house of David. Upon arriving, the angel said to Mary, “Rejoice, highly favored one! God is with you! Blessed are you among women!” Mary was deeply troubled by these words and wondered what the angel’s greeting meant. The angel went on to say to her, “Don’t be afraid, Mary. You have found favor with God. You’ll conceive and bear a son, and give him the name Jesus—‘Deliverance.’ His dignity will be great, and he will be called the Only Begotten of God. God will give Jesus the judgment seat of David, his ancestor, to rule over the house of Jacob forever, and his reign will never end.”

Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I have never been with a man?” The angel answered her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you—hence the offspring to be born will be called the Holy One of God. Know too that Elizabeth, your kinswoman, has conceived a child in her old age; she who was thought to be infertile is now in her sixth month. Nothing is impossible with God.” Mary said, “I am the servant of God. Let it be done to me as you say.” With that, the angel left her.

Within a few days Mary set out and hurried to the hill country to a town of Judah, where she entered Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. As soon as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed, “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! But why am I so favored, that the mother of the Messiah should come to me? The moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who believed that what our God said to her would be accomplished!”

Mary said:

“My soul proclaims your greatness, O God,
and my spirit rejoices in you, my Savior.

For you have looked with favor
upon your lowly servant,
and from this day forward
all generations will call me blessed.

For you, the Almighty, have done great things for me,
and holy is your Name.

Your mercy reaches from age to age
for those who fear you.

You have shown strength with your arm;
you have scattered the proud in their conceit;
you have deposed the mighty from their thrones
and raised the lowly to high places.
You have filled the hungry with good things,
while you have sent the rich away empty.
You have come to the aid of Israel your servant,
mindful of your mercy—
the promise you made to our ancestors—
to Sarah and Abraham
and their descendants forever.”

Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then returned home.

Reflection

Joyful, Anyway

Prayers of Joy—*Please write on your star a word or phrase of peace. We will collect them before the prayer, name them aloud, and add to our prayer wall.*

Child of Joy, Spirit of Audacity, we come to you today weary of the forces that make joy such a difficult thing to hold, weary of the effort it takes to birth something new in a world bent on regressing away from wholeness for all people. We know you are with us, for you came to our human story when we needed your message so much. We still do. We ask, “what child is this that we follow, and who are we in the scene of this unfolding story?” As the nativity begins to fill with the promise of new birth, we again plead for your presence to break into our lives and show us the light of joy. And we ask for the courage to step into the scene, preparing the way for fullness of possibility for all people. Amen.

Hymn

Lift Up Your Heads, O Mighty Gates, 176

We Respond to God’s Word with Our Giving

Invitation—What gifts are adequate for the Son of Mary, the Bringer of Joy? Our theme song says “so bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come peasant, king, to own him.” Whether what we have to give is simply the gift of our presence and gratitude, or if we are privileged with precious resources, we give what we can. In this way we “take ownership” of our role in the scene, in the unfolding story of Joy.

Ministry Moment

Christmas in Wanamaker, Pastor Sarah

December Benevolence

The Christmas Fund

*Doxology

We Give Thanks—Precious God, take these gifts in the spirit they were given, with joy and love for our siblings around the world. Let us remember that we all have times of trouble. We will each stand before you, hands clasped in prayer, begging for relief. Use what we have here to bring that relief where it is needed most. Amen.+

Hymn

Joy to the World, 179

Benediction with Sung Response (lyrics on screen)— May the Sovereign of All, the Child of Hope, the Spirit of Resistance to Injustice be with you now and as you go. Amen.

Postlude

Liturgy from © worshipdesignstudio.com/whatchild unless otherwise noted. +Worship Ways.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

THIS WEEK AT ZION

- Sunday, 9 am – Choir Practice
- Wednesday, 11 pm – Christmas Eve Worship
- Friday – OFFICE CLOSED
- Sunday, December 28, 9 am – Bell Choir Practice
- Sunday, December 28, 10 am – Carol Sing in Worship
- Sunday, December 28, after worship – Christmas Fellowship and Treats

ADVENT AT ZION

- **CHRISTMAS EVE WORSHIP**—Gather around the nativity with us as we celebrate Christ's birth. Our Candlelight Christmas Eve worship begins at 11 pm, in-person and online, and ends with the ringing of the Christmas bell at midnight. All are welcome.
- **CAROL SING**—Join us the Sunday after Christmas for a carol sing in worship. We'll learn about the history of some of our favorite Christmas songs. Continue the celebration of Christ's birth as we lift our voices in joy and praise. A simple reception will follow worship.
- **EPIPHANY**—A great light guided the way of the magi long ago, and God's light still guides us today. On Sunday, January 4 we will follow God's guiding light for our lives and will receive our Epiphany Star Words to help guide us through the year.
- **CHRISTMAS CARDS FOR JAPAN**—We've been paired with two congregations in the United Church of Christ in Japan, Sendai Nishi Church and Shinjo Church. Please pray for these churches throughout the season.
- **CHRISTMAS CONCERT**—We are so grateful to the Good Time Singers for their

willingness to share their joy with us this season. Thank you to everyone for their understanding as the Good Time Singers canceled their concert due to weather.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **PASTOR SARAH**—Pastor Sarah will be on vacation December 25-January 3. Ted Schory will be on call for any pastoral care emergencies.
- **MINISTRY MOMENT**—Sign up today to share a Ministry Moment. This moment could be about ministries you're involved in at Zion or ways that you are serving your neighbors or reaching out to others. See Pastor Sarah with any questions you might have about what you might share. We'd love to hear your witness about God at work in the world and at Zion.
- **SRI LANKA PARTNERSHIP TRIP**—As the chair of the Indiana-Kentucky Conference Sri Lanka Partnership Team, Pastor Sarah will help lead a delegation to visit our partners in Sri Lanka in the Church of the American Ceylon Mission. The trip is January 21-February 2. Our conference is looking to raise \$15,000 for this trip. The partnership team is excited to announce that they've received a \$7,500 grant from Global Ministries to support this trip. Hold our partnership team in your prayers as they set out to do this important work.
- **FAITH FORMATION SURVEY**—The Faith Formation Team has been busy with plans for 2026. We hope everyone will be able to participate in small groups that read through the Gospel of Matthew. In order to plan these small groups, we ask that you please fill out this survey to help with our planning. Hardcopies have been shared in the bulletins and can be dropped in the box in the back of the sanctuary. A digital copy is also available. Complete your survey by December 21.
- **ORDINATION**—You're invited to celebrate the ordination of Pastor Sarah on Sunday, January 11. Worship begins at 3 pm in the sanctuary, and a reception will follow in the Fellowship Hall. The service will be livestreamed for those who cannot make it in-person. The choir will practice at 2 pm.

SERVE

- **DECEMBER BENEVOLENCE**—For over 100 years, The Christmas Fund has been providing and caring for active and retired UCC pastors, church workers, and their families. This year, help *Be the Light* that brings joy to those that are and have faithfully served. This is one of the five special offerings of the United Church of Christ. Please consider support those who have served so faithfully.