

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

January 28th, 2024

4th Sunday after Epiphany

A Service of the Word



**“The people were spellbound by the teaching,
because Jesus taught with an authority” (Mark 1:22).**

Artist Unknown

The Lonely Pilgrim. <https://lonelypilgrim.com/2015/01/13/he-taught-them-as-one-having-authority/>



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WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

“Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced.”
--James Baldwin--

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

***Call to Worship (from Psalm 111 and Deuteronomy 18: 15-20)**

One: We come to worship

Many: Giving thanks with whole hearts...

One: In the company of this congregation

Many: We worship the One who is gracious and merciful...

One: Holy and awesome is God’s name!

Many: Let us worship God together!

*** Invocation Prayer**

**Holy God,
holy, gracious, and merciful,
we gather mindful
of your covenant with us
and all creation.**

**We gather mindful
of your wonderful deeds
and your powerful work
among us.**

**Grant that we
may be joined
with all your creation
in praising you
in the name of the One**

who was, and is, and is to come.
Amen.

***Gathering Hymn - NCH 8 - "Praise to the Living God"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading: Deuteronomy 18:15-20

In this reading from the Hebrew Bible, Moses prepared the people before they entered the promised land, knowing he would not go with them. The people requested God to raise up a new prophet after Moses, because they believed if they heard the voice of God themselves, they would die. God promised to raise up a prophet from among them, someone who would speak on behalf of God and God's ways. God would hold accountable those who did not listen to God's words through the prophet, and God would also hold accountable any prophet who spoke words God did not say or spoke on behalf of other gods.

18 15 YHWH, your God, will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; to that prophet you must listen. 16 It was this that you asked of YHWH, your God, at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, "Let us not hear again the voice of YHWH, our God, nor see this great fire again, or we will die."

17 And YHWH said to me, "This is well said. 18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their people, into whose mouth I will put my words, and that person will tell them all that I command. 19 If any person will not to listen to the words that my prophet speaks in my Name, I myself will call that person to answer for this. 20 But if a prophet presumes to speak in my Name a message that I have not commanded to be spoken, or speaks in the name of other gods—that prophet will die."

Psalm Response: Psalm 111 (Responsively)

Psalm 111 is a Hebrew alphabet acrostic poem, like many of the psalms, and is a song of praise and thanksgiving to God. The psalmist speaks in the first person but on behalf of the congregation, telling all the wonderful deeds of God who has been faithful to the covenant with the people. God's ways are established for eternity, for the covenant was established forever. The psalm concludes with a reminder that the fear, or awe, of God is the beginning of wisdom. Those who are in awe of God have a foundation, a good understanding for how to live.

111 1 Alleluia!

I will thank you, God, with all my heart
in the meeting of the just and their assembly.

**2 Great are your works,
to be pondered by all who love them.**

3 Majestic and glorious are your works,
and your justice stands firm forever.

**4 You make us remember your wonders—
you are compassion and love.**

5 You give food to those who revere you,
keeping your Covenant ever in mind.

**6 You reveal to your people the power of your actions
by giving them the lands of the nations as their
inheritance.**

7 The works of your hands are truth and justice,
and all your precepts are sure,

**8 standing firm forever and ever,
and carried out uprightly and faithfully.**

9 You have sent deliverance to your people
and established your Covenant forever.
your Name is holy and awe-inspiring!

**10 Reverence for God is the beginning of wisdom—
and those who have it prove themselves wise.
Your praise will last forever!**

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Paul writes to the church in Corinth about how to live with others and with cultural differences in these verses of 1 Corinthians 8. The church in Corinth was predominantly Greek, but some of its members were newer to the faith than others. While Paul knows that the church leaders know there are no other gods but God and no idols are real, some of those who have recently begun to follow Christ might be appalled at those eating meat, for meat was obtained at the local temple sacrifice to the Greek gods. For Paul this wasn't an issue—those gods didn't exist, it's just meat, buy it and eat it. But he knew for new converts this might be a struggle because of how that sacrificed meat was determined as sacred by the Greeks, and suggests that if this was a stumbling block, don't eat meat around those who view it as offered out of sacrifice. Even if we have the knowledge that there are no idols or gods, we ought not to hold it over others, but rather to live out of compassion and kindness. How we live ought to be a reflection of the same love we have from Christ, who died on behalf of all of us.

8 1 Now, concerning food sacrificed to idols.

We all possess knowledge. But knowledge puffs up, whereas love builds up. 2 You may think you know something, but you still won't know it the way you ought. 3 But anyone who loves God is known—completely—by God.

4 Well then, what about eating food sacrificed to idols? We know that idols have no real existence, that there is no God but the One. 5 Even though there are so-called gods in the heavens—and on the earth as well, where there seem to be many gods and sovereigns—6 for us there is only One God, Abba God, from whom all things come and for whom we live. There is one Sovereign, Jesus Christ, through whom everything was made and through whom we live.

7 Some people, accustomed to idol worship until recently, are consumed with guilt every time they eat meat they buy in the market, because they know that the meat had been sacrificed to idols—and their conscience, because it is weak, gets defiled every time they eat. 8 But food cannot bring us closer to God. We lose nothing if we refuse to eat. We gain nothing if we choose to eat.

9 Be on your guard, however, that this liberty of yours does not become a pitfall for those who are weak. 10 Suppose someone who has this knowledge sees you eating in some idol's temple, won't this person be tempted to eat meat offered to idols? 11 Realize that your knowledge—that idols are nothing and thus it is all right to eat this meat freely—might be the ruination of a weak sister or brother, for whose sake Christ died. 12 By sinning against your sisters and brothers in this way and injuring their weak consciences, you are sinning against Christ. 13 Therefore, if meat causes my sister or brother to stumble, I will never eat it again—I don't want to be an occasion for sin to them.

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:21-28

In these verses in Mark 1, Jesus taught for the first time at a synagogue in Capernaum. Jesus astounded the people there because he taught differently than the scribes—he taught with authority. When a person with an unclean spirit entered the synagogue and challenged Jesus, Jesus rebuked the spirit, and it left the person. The people who witnessed this were amazed at this new teaching with authority, authority that even the spirits obeyed him. This is a hard passage for us today to interpret and understand. In the first century C.E., the understanding of the spiritual world and the physical world was such that everything had both a physical and spiritual component. Jesus addressed the evil spirit and rebuked it. Perhaps the authority Jesus demonstrated was knowing that this person needed help in that moment—not something to be pushed off, addressed at another time. Consistently through scripture, when someone comes to Jesus with an immediate need, he immediately (especially in Mark's gospel account as Mark loves that word immediately) addressed the person and the need.

1 21 They came to Capernaum, and on the Sabbath Jesus entered the synagogue and began to teach. 22 The people were spellbound by the teaching, because Jesus taught with an authority that was unlike their religious scholars.

23 Suddenly a person with an unclean spirit appeared in their synagogue. It shrieked, 24 “What do you want from us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!”

25 Jesus rebuked the spirit sharply: “Be quiet! Come out of that person!” 26 At that the unclean spirit convulsed the possessed one violently, and with a loud shriek it came out.

27 All who looked on were amazed. They began to ask one another, “What is this? A new teaching, and with such authority! This person even gives orders to unclean spirits and they obey!” 28 Immediately news of Jesus spread throughout the surrounding region of Galilee.

Choir Hymn - NCH 547 - "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound"

*Choir: Barbara Rossington, Bob Bucklew, and Keith Konet
Accompanist: Adam Petrosino*

Reflection – Astonished, Amazed, and in Awe - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

***Prayer of Response**

Compassionate One, this month always seems like the longest of the year, moving away from the joy of Christmas and the hopes of the new year, having long left the starlight the magi followed, to find a different way.

We look back and see that you have been with us, and you are continuing to lead us on. For the resolutions and goals and intentions that have already fallen away, help us to leave them behind, and instead, remember that each day is a new beginning with you.

Each day is one full rotation of the Earth and one million six hundred thousand miles from where we were yesterday. We are always moving, O God, and you are moving with us, and leading us forward.

As we prepare to say goodbye to January and hello to February, these marks on the calendar, the days, months, and years that we created, we give you thanks for what has passed, and pray for what is to come.

Lead us on, Sojourning God, for your time is not our time.

You are what has been, what is, and what is to come, the Alpha and Omega, the Almighty Ancient of Days, and Spirit of New Life. Amen.

***Hymn of Response - "O God, We Rage at Hurtful Things"**

(sung to the tune of NCH 25 - "Our God Our Help in Ages Past")

"O God, We Rage at Hurtful Things"

Author: Carolyn Winfrey Gillette 2005

Tune: ST. ANNE C.M. 8.6.8.6.

Composer: William Croft, 1708

**1 O God, we rage at hurtful things
Beyond our own control,
Like all the pain that illness brings
To body, mind and soul.**

**2 There's much we cannot understand;
O Lord, we ask you, "Why?"
And yet in Christ you know firsthand**

The tears your people cry.

3 O Christ, your loving, saving touch
Heals children, women, men.
We pray for ones we love so much;
Lord, make them whole again.

4 Now work through those your Spirit sends
To heal, restore and care.
May doctors, nurses, neighbors, friends
Be answers to our prayer.

5 And when the journey seems too rough
And you seem far away,
Remind us, Lord: You are enough
To bring us through each day

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

One: Just as God's works are gracious and merciful, faithful and just, God calls us to works of grace, mercy, faithfulness and justice. The offerings we bring are a witness and a contribution to this church's works in the world. May we freely share and participate in God's work of grace and mercy, faith and justice.

The Offertory – *Adam Petrosino*

***Presentation of Offerings – Doxology**

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

***Blessing of the Gifts**

Let us pray:

We worship with our whole hearts, and give with our whole hearts, remembering your covenant with us, O God. As we share these gifts, may they be for the work of faithful justice and gracious mercy through your church and in your world. Amen.

Prayers of the People

The Lord's Prayer (*using "debts" and "debtors"*)

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.

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn - NCH 76 - "Sent Forth by God's Blessing"**

***Commissioning**

One: Now, let us go from this sacred space,
**Many: to be with those who are homeless on the streets,
with those who are lonely in the hospitals.**

One: Now, let us leave this family of God,
**Many: to care for those who have been forgotten,
to lift those shoved aside by the world.**

One: Now, let us set aside this holy time,
**Many: to go into the moments of hunger for little children,
to be with those whose days seem to have no end.**

***Benediction**

One: The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit
be with you all (*2 Corinthians 13:14*).

All: Amen.

Postlude - Adam Petrosino (*please be seated for the Postlude*)

* * * * *

Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, and the Blessing of the Gifts, are adapted from: *"The Works" Service Prayers for the 4th Sunday after Epiphany 4A – January 28th, 2024* posted on *Worship Ways* on the website of the United Church of Christ. <https://www.ucc.org/worship-way/epiphany-4b-january-28-2/>. Permission granted to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for January 28th, 2024*, written by Rev. Mindi Welton Mitchell, posted January 19th, 2024, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lution.org>
- (3) The Commissioning is adapted from *Liturgy and Communion from January 28th, 2024*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted January 21st, 2024 on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (4) Permission to stream the music in this service obtained from ONE License #A-736636. All rights reserved

Ministers, All of Us
Scott Rosenstein, Pastor
Adam Petrosino, Music Director and Pianist
Keith Konet, Council President
Beverly Wurm, Administrative Assistant



NEWS AND UPCOMING EVENTS

God is Still Speaking...

No matter who you are, or where you are on life's journey, you will find a spiritual home in this United Church of Christ congregation. WELCOME!

Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont is committed to reaching out to all people with the saving "Good News" of God's Love. To do this, we strive to attain a covenant relationship with people of all races, colors, ethnic origins, ages, sexual orientations and identity. We are also committed to grace-filled inclusivity in our worship, programs, membership, mission and social activities. We very strongly believe in outreach and community involvement, as well as ecumenical spiritual involvement within the surrounding community. We are committed to listening to history while joining with

the future.

Tithes and Offerings - Checks and Money Orders can be made payable to: "Zion United Church of Christ" and placed in the offering basket or mailed to:

**Zion United Church of Christ
c/o Keith Konet
1039 Bridlewood Drive
Copley, OH 44321**

Questions: Contact Keith Konet at 330.604.6939

Adam D. Petrosino, Our Music Director/Pianist

We are so pleased to welcome Adam, and his partner, Kiel, to our community of faith here at Zion United Church of Christ of Tremont, Cleveland, Ohio. We're grateful to you sharing your presence, faith, and musical gifts with us.

Adam can be reached by e-mail at A.D.Petrosino@gmail.com and by phone at 234-205-9397.

Administrative Assistant, Beverly Wurm

Beverly is keeping some limited Office Hours at church (2700 W. 14th)/home. The days and hours are:

Winter Schedule:

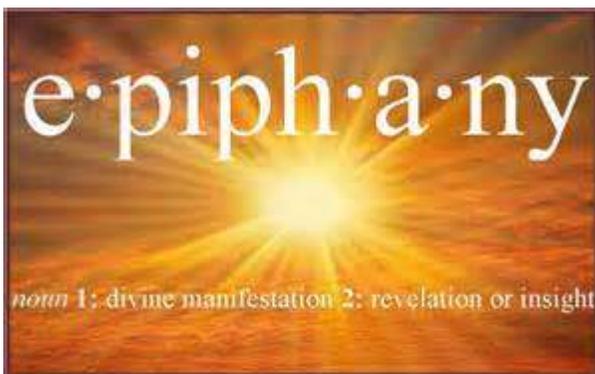
Tuesday– 9am – 1pm

Wednesday – 10am-2 pm

Thursday – 9am – 1pm

Beverly can be reached at: zionchurchtremont@gmail.com or by phone at: 216-273-7561 (church) or 216-310-6810 (mobile).

The Festival of Epiphany and the season that follows...

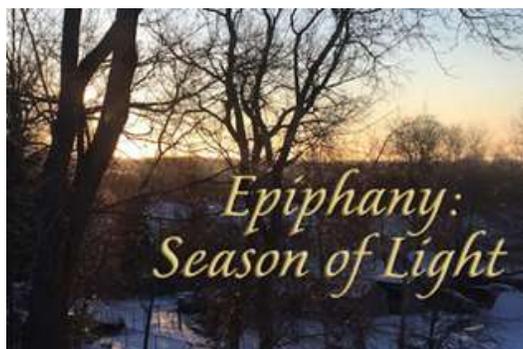


The Festival of Epiphany is not only marked by a single historical event but also by a series of events tied together by a theme. "Epiphany" means "revelation" or "new understanding," and the biblical stories associated with Epiphany and the season that follows share a common "aha" quality.

The passages include the epiphany of the Magi who come to know the significance of the Messiah's birth, the epiphany of Jesus who embraces his baptism and

his life's unique identity and mission, the epiphany of John the Baptizer who identifies Jesus as the Lamb of God, and the epiphany of the first disciples who leave behind the familiar to explore the radically new. These are all significant personal events of powerful discovery, self-realization, and transformation.

The United Church of Christ, along with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the United Methodist Church, celebrates on the day of Epiphany, January 6th, (or the Sunday closest) the revelation of Christ to all nations as represented by the Magi who come to worship Jesus. The church calendar recognizes the season of Epiphany from January 6th until the last Sunday before Ash Wednesday which is celebrated as the Transfiguration of Christ/Transfiguration of our Lord. The length of the season of Epiphany varies and is determined by working backwards through the season of Lent from the moveable date for the celebration of Easter.



Among the principal themes are: the revelation of Christ to all nations, Jesus' baptism in the River Jordan, and Christ as the light of the world. The colors of the season are white (a color associated with the festivals of Christ and suggesting gladness, joy and light for the day of Epiphany), used the first week after the Epiphany when the Baptism of Christ/Baptism of our Lord is celebrated, and the last week of the season of Epiphany when the Transfiguration of

Christ/our Lord is celebrated; and green, reminiscent of living plants and suggests spiritual growth. Green is used in the season of Epiphany beginning with the second week after the Epiphany until the week before the Transfiguration of Christ/Transfiguration of our Lord is celebrated. These churches use the terms "Time after Epiphany" to describe this period. The expression with "after" has been interpreted as making the period in question correspond to that of Ordinary Time.**

**Ordinary Time refers to two periods of time in the Christian liturgical year that are found in the calendar of the ordinary form of the Roman Rite of the Catholic Church, as well as some other churches of Western Christianity, including the Anglican Communion, Methodist churches, Lutheran churches, Old Catholic churches and Reformed churches. In Latin, the name of this time is *Tempus per annum* translated as time during the year.

Ordinary Time comprises two periods: the first period begins on Epiphany Day (in the Anglican Communion and Methodist churches) or the day after the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord (in the Roman Catholic Church) and ends on the day before Ash Wednesday; the second period begins on the Monday after Pentecost, the conclusion of the Easter season, and continues until the Saturday before the First Sunday of Advent.

In some traditions, the first period is celebrated as the Season after Epiphany, and the latter of these periods is observed as the Season after Pentecost. Both of these periods of time, combined, are the longest time in the liturgical year. The weeks of Ordinary Time are numbered. Several Sundays bear the name of feasts or solemnities celebrated on those days, including Trinity Sunday and the Feast of Christ the King/Reign of Christ. The liturgical color normally assigned to Ordinary Time is green.**

Please Remember in Prayer

- The Universal Church, its members and mission,
- The nation and all in authority, the leaders of our nation - federal, state, and local.
- For democracy and our democratic institutions and norms in the United States.
- The welfare of the world and the concerns of the local community.
- The interrelationship of Gospel values and civic engagement.
- Ministries of the United Church of Christ and of Zion Church.
- The leaders of our church: local, regional, and national, including The Rev. Karen Georgia Thompson, General Minister and President of the United Church of Christ. We also pray for our Living Water Association UCC, Association General Minister, The Rev. Nayiri Karjian, and Association Faith in Action Minister, The Rev. Michael Howard.
- The ministers and missionaries of the world.
- Those who are refugees and immigrants.
- For children separated from their parents at detention camps along our southern border.
- For racial and religious justice and reconciliation in the United States and around the world.
- Mother Earth and the global reflection on climate disruption.
- For peace, justice, and freedom throughout the world and particularly for the peoples of Ukraine, Afghanistan, Iraq, Iran, and the United States.



An armed conflict between Israel and Hamas-led Palestinian militant groups has been taking place chiefly in and around the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023, with clashes also taking place in the West Bank and on the Israel–Lebanon border. On that day, militant groups launched a surprise attack on southern Israel from the Gaza Strip, marking the start of the most significant military escalation in the region since the Yom Kippur War exactly fifty years prior. After clearing Hamas militants from its territory, the Israeli military embarked on an extensive aerial bombardment of the Gaza Strip followed by a large-scale ground invasion. The current hostilities constitute the fifth war of the Gaza–Israel conflict, which is part of the broader Israeli–Palestinian conflict and Iran–Israel proxy conflict.

The war began when Hamas-led Palestinian militant groups targeted Israel in an operation they called "Al-Aqsa Flood" with a barrage of rockets, while around 3,000 militants breached the Gaza–Israel barrier and attacked neighboring Israeli communities and military bases. 1,139 people—695 Israeli civilians, 373 soldiers and 71 foreigner nationals —were killed, including an unknown number from friendly fire. Hamas said its attack was in response to "desecration" of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, as well as the growth of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and recent violence and clashes there, the blockade of the Gaza Strip, and the plight of Palestinian refugees and prisoners, the latter of whom it sought to free by taking an estimated 250 Israeli and foreign nationals as captives into Gaza as leverage. In response, Israel tightened its blockade, ordered the evacuation of the northern Gaza Strip, and fired over 29,000 munitions at targets in Gaza before and during its ground offensive, with the stated goal of dismantling Hamas's "military and governance capabilities", freeing the hostages, and establishing security

control over Gaza. Over 24,000 Palestinians have been killed, a majority of them civilians, and thousands more are considered missing under the rubble of destroyed buildings. The scale, extent, and pace of this destruction ranks among the most severe in the history of modern warfare. A severe humanitarian crisis has resulted, with the most hospitals out of service, shortages of food and medicine, communications blackouts, and people forced to drink contaminated water. It was widely reported that there was "no safe place in Gaza" as Israel struck areas which it had previously suggested were safer. Israel contends that Hamas, operating in tunnels dug beneath Gaza, uses the civilian population as human shields and diverts humanitarian supplies for military purposes. The widespread civilian deaths have led to both Israel and Hamas being accused of war crimes. Nearly all of Gaza's 2.3 million population and around 500,000 Israelis have been internally displaced, while thousands of Palestinians have been detained by Israel.

- On January 1 2024, an earthquake of magnitude 7.6 on the Richter scale on the Noto Peninsula, Ishikawa Prefecture, Japan, caused an intensity 7 (JMA) in Shiga Town, and intensity 6+ and 6- in many municipalities in the Noto Peninsula. Also, a tsunami of almost 4' was observed. There have been numerous aftershocks. The earthquake caused many deaths, injuries, collapsed houses, spreading fires and landslides.
- According to data from the Gun Violence Archive a total of 26 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of January 24th.

Mass shooting incidents in the past 10 years in the US:

2023 – 656 (*While mass shooting incidents increased slightly since 2022, 2023 has shown an 8-10% overall DECREASE in deaths and injuries from gun violence. Some cities saw 20%+ decreases.*)

2022 - 646

2021 - 689

2020 - 610

2019 - 414

2018 - 335

2017 - 247

2016 - 383

2015 - 332

2014 - 272

While we pray for the families and friends of those whose lives have been taken in violent acts – and we pray for those injured in body, mind, soul, and spirit—and for their neighborhoods and communities across the United States – We know that our words and prayers are not enough. We must repent for our collective inaction and commit to tirelessly working toward meaningful gun violence prevention.

- For those affected by the coronavirus COVID-19 pandemic and the various variant surges: for all those who are infected and/or sick, and those who are grieving, for all who are affected, all around the world, for essential workers and frontline workers...we pray for their comfort, for safety, for health, and for wholeness.
- The residents and management of the San Sofia Apartments who share a campus with us.
- Those anticipating surgery, recovering from surgery, or undergoing medical procedures, tests, or treatments.

- Those living in assisted living or in a nursing home
- Those who are homebound and those who are caregivers
- Those who suffer or are in any trouble, and the departed.
- Those on our church prayer list:
- Patti Augustine (*health concerns*) and family. *Patti's brother Dave is recovering from recent open-heart surgery.*
- Robert O. Bucklew (*Bob Bucklew's Dad*) is residing at Mapleridge Senior Living Willoughby, OH. Robert recently celebrated his 91st Birthday.
- The family, loved ones, and friends of Betty Funk.
- Marian Heffernan (*neighbor to Scott and Bob – health concerns*)
- Ken Kauffman & friends: Nim Bryant, Isadora Almaro, Joe & Janelle Reardon, Barbara Reed, Nancy Moore's sister has passed away and prayer for Nancy's neighbor for healing.
- Jocelyn Paulette and her parents, Kevin & Jacqui Konet - prayers for recovery.
- Keith Konet and family.
- The family, loved ones, and friends of Elaine Lukacs.
- Patricia Matheny Kellogg and family (*including prayers for her Cousin Paul Kevin McCray*). Also Patricia's friend, Sue Renovitz (*undergoing cancer treatments*). Also prayer for the family of Steve Linkenauger (*following Steve's recent death – Steve was a friend of Zion's Saturday Hot Meals program*).
- Our Music Director & Pianist, Adam Petrosino, and his partner, Kiel.
- Our Pastor Scott Rosenstein (*recovering from coronary care procedures*)
- Barbara Rossington (*Prayers for Barb - & Prayers for Barb's cousin, Robert*)
- Debbie Webb (*continued prayers*)
- Beverly Wurm (*prayers for family*)