

ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

February 4th, 2024

5th Sunday after Epiphany

A Service of the Word and Holy Communion



Gospel Story Art Mark 1:29-39

by Stushie

A Scottish Pastor, ministering in East Tennessee

Stushie Art-Church bulletin covers, unique crayon, markers and digital worship art

<https://stushieart.com>



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WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

**“How we spend our days is, of course, how we spend our lives.
What we do with this hour, and that one, is what we are doing.”**
*-Annie Dillard, **The Writing Life**, 1989-*

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude – *Adam Petrosino*

***Call to Worship** *(from Psalm 147: 1-11, 20c and Isaiah 40: 21-31)*

One: To whom can we compare you, O Holy One?

All: We lift up our eyes,

One: We wait upon the Eternal our God.

All: How good it is to sing praises to our God.

One: A song of praise is fitting!

All: Let us worship God together.

*** Invocation Prayer**

**Everlasting God,
Creator of the ends of the earth,
you who spread the heavens
like a curtain,
and make us a tent to live in,
gather us in the shelter of your love,
and renew our strength,
that with wings as eagles
we might not grow weary
as we walk with you.
We pray in the power
of your Holy Spirit.
Amen.**

***Gathering Hymn - NCH 21 - "God Reigns o'er All the Earth"**

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading: Isaiah 40:21-31

Isaiah 40 is considered the beginning of what is sometimes referred to as Second Isaiah, a prophet who witnessed the events at the end of the Babylonian exile. King Cyrus of Persia, having conquered Babylonia, allowed the exiles held there to return home. This was a chance to start again with God as God's people. In this passage, the prophet reminds the people that they know this already. They've heard this from the beginning of time. God is over all creation, over all the earth, and the rulers of this world have no power over God—they are temporary and will pass. Some of those hearing these words may have been alive when they were taken into exile and remember what they have lost; they will recognize God's faithfulness. There is no one like God. God questions the people as to why they say that God has ignored them. God's response is that God has been there since the beginning, renewing and reviving the people. Those who are young in their understanding of God will struggle, but those who know how to wait (those who have lived through the exile to the return, or those who held on to the promise) will find their strength renewed. God is with them, and God will help them to soar like eagles.

40 21 Did you not know?

Have you not heard?

Was it not told to you from the beginning?

Have you not understood since the earth was
founded?

22 YHWH sits above the vaulted roof of the world,
and its inhabitants look like grasshoppers!
God stretches out the skies like a curtain,
and spreads them out like a tent for mortals to live
under!

23 God reduces the privileged to nothing
and throws the rulers of the earth into chaos.

24 No sooner are they planted,
no sooner are they sown,
no sooner do they take root on earth,
than God blows on them and they wither,
and a storm wind sweeps them away like chaff.

25 "To whom can you liken me?
Who is my equal?" says the Holy One.

26 Lift up your eyes and ask yourself
who made these stars,
if not the One who drills them like an army,
calling each by name?
Because God is so great in strength,
so mighty in power,

not a single one is missing.

- 27 How can you say,
tribe of Leah and Rachel and Jacob,
“My destiny is hidden from YHWH,
my rights are ignored by my God?”
- 28 Do you not know? Have you not heard?
YHWH is the everlasting God,
the Creator of the ends of the earth.
This God does not faint or grow weary;
with a depth of understanding that is unsearchable.
- 29 God give strength to those who are weary,
and empowers those who are powerless.
- 30 Young women may grow tired and weary,
young men may stumble and fall,
- 31 but those who wait for YHWH
find a renewed power:
they soar on eagles’ wings,
they run and don’t get weary,
they walk and never tire.

Psalm Response: Psalm 147:1-11, 20c (Responsively)

These verses of Psalm 147 form a song of praise to God who has gathered in those who are outcasts, those who are scattered, and brought them home to Jerusalem. God is over all creation, including the stars, and yet God cares enough for the people to lift up those who are downtrodden, and cast down those who are wicked. God is the one who provides for all and doesn’t look to strength and might for favor. God does consider those who live in God’s ways, are in awe of God, and have hope in God’s everlasting love.

147 1 alleluia!

How good it is to praise our God!
How pleasant and how fitting to sing God’s praise!

**2 God rebuilds Jerusalem,
and gathers Israel’s exiles.**

3 God heals those who are brokenhearted,
and binds up their wounds.

**4 God knows the number of the stars
and calls each one by name.**

5 Great is God, and mighty in power;
there is no limit to God’s wisdom.

**6 God lifts up those who are oppressed,
and casts those who are corrupt to the ground.**

7 sing to our God with thanksgiving;
sing praise with the harp to our God—
**8 who covers the heavens with clouds,
who provides rain for the earth,
who makes grass sprout on the mountains
and herbs for the service of the people,**

9 who gives food to the cattle,
and to the young ravens when they cry.
**10 God does not thrill to the strength of the horse,
or revel in the swiftness of humans.**

11 God delights in those who worship with reverence
and put their hope in divine love.

20c alleluia!

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:16-23

The Epistle readings continue in the series of Paul's letters to the Corinthians. In these verses of 1 Corinthians 9, Paul was entrusted to preach the Gospel to the gentiles. There is no reward for this, but by preaching the Gospel with no charge, he can be true to the Gospel and not to the rewards of wealth. Paul has become all things to all people—seeing cultural differences as a gift, not a dividing tool, to sharing the Gospel.

9 16 Not that I do boast about preaching the Gospel; I am under compulsion and have no choice. I am ruined if I do not preach the Gospel! 17 If I do it willingly, I have my reward; if unwillingly, I am nonetheless entrusted with a charge. 18 What then is my reward? It is simply this: that when preaching, I offer the Gospel free of charge and do not assert the authority the Gospel gives me. 19 Although I am not bound to anyone, I put myself into the service of all so as to win over as many as possible.

20 To the Jews I became even more Jewish, to win over the Jewish people; even though I am not subject to the Law, I made myself subject to the Law, to win those who are subject to the Law. 21 To those who have no law, I was free of the Law, too—though not free from God's Law, being subject to the Law of Christ—to win those who have no law. 22 To those who are weak I became weak to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I might save at least some of them. 23 In fact, I do all that I do for the sake of the Gospel in the hope of having a share in its blessings.

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:29-39

In these verses in Mark 1, Jesus continues the beginning of his ministry with his first four disciples. In last week's reading, he taught for the first time (that we have recorded) in a synagogue and cast out a demon from a man. In today's reading, he left the synagogue and went to Simon's and Andrew's house, and cared for Simon's mother-in-law who had a fever. Once the fever left her, she got up and began serving Jesus. Everyone from the city came to Jesus at Simon's and Andrew's home, bringing those who were sick or possessed with demons. Jesus ministered among them, but early in

the morning went off by himself to pray in the darkness. Already, Jesus needed to take some time for spiritual renewal. The disciples went and "hunted" for him, and when they found him told him that everyone was looking for him. However, Jesus told them it was time to go on from that place to the neighboring towns in Galilee, for that was what he came to do. Jesus was not meant to stay in one place.

1 29 Upon leaving the synagogue, Jesus entered Simon's and Andrew's house with James and John. 30 Simon's mother-in-law lay ill with a fever, and immediately they told Jesus about her.

31 Jesus went over to her, took her by the hand and helped her up, and the fever left her. Then she went about her service.

32 After sunset, as evening drew on, they brought to Jesus all who were ill and possessed by demons. 33 Everyone in the town crowded around the door. 34 Jesus healed many who were sick with different diseases, and cast out many demons. But Jesus would not permit the demons to speak, because they knew who he was.

35 Rising early the next morning, Jesus went off to a lonely place in the desert and prayed there. 36 Simon and some companions hunted to find Jesus 37 and said to him, "Everybody is looking for you!"

38 Jesus said to them, "Let us move on to the neighboring villages so that I may proclaim the Good News there also. That is what I have come to do." 39 So Jesus went into their synagogues proclaiming the Good News and expelling demons throughout the whole of Galilee.

Choir Hymn - NCH 473 - "Blessed Assurance"

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

Reflection – "How We Spend Our Days is How We Spend Our Lives" - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

***Prayer of Response**

God of the Dark, you are the giver of dreams and visions, the One who sits with us in the quiet, who accompanies us in the loneliness. As Jesus ventured out into the darkness to pray, may we also find times to seek you without the distractions of the world. May we remember how expansive your love is, like the endless stars at night. May we listen for your word in our heart, and may you grant us a dream and vision for our own lives, to seek you, to love you and your ways, and to share your love with the world. May we know that periods of loneliness are temporary, for we are called into community to journey together. Sit with us in the dark as necessary and guide us back to our beloved community. Amen.

***Hymn of Response: NCH 488 - "Be Still My Soul"**

Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Our scripture this morning teaches that God builds up, lifts up, binds up, heals, covers, and shelters us. May the gifts that we bring and share extend these ministries.

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**

Holy One, we bring our gifts and pray that they may be for the building up and lifting up of your people, for the binding of wounds and the healing of hearts, for shelter and for covering and clothing for those in need. With these gifts we offer our songs of praise as we hope in your steadfast love. Amen.

***Call to Reconciliation**

We walk through life, confident, strong, boasting of all our achievements. But God sees the hurts we have inflicted on others, the weariness in our bones from chasing after bad choices, and all the foolishness we trip over in the busyness of life. Let us come to God, for the One who listens to our faltering words is the One who gives us the Word filled with grace and mercy. Join me as we pray together, saying,

***Unison Prayer for Forgiveness**

We cannot hide from you, Everlasting God, even if we were to go from one edge of creation to the next. You speak to us of compassion, but the ways in which we treat others show we have not been listening. You explain your hopes to us, and we act as if we don't have a clue as to what is going on. We run as fast, and as far, from you as we can, and wonder why we have no energy to follow Jesus.

Yet you search for us in all the deserted places we flee to, Never-wearied God, so you can take us by the hand to show us the way to life with you. You heal our broken hearts so we can offer them to others. You fill us with your strength so we can bind ourselves to Jesus, our Savior, following him to serve all of your children.

Silence is kept

***Assurance of Forgiveness**

One: Have you not been listening? God never tires out,

nor is there is an expiration date on God's forgiveness.
God is ever with us, healing us with mercy,
and strengthening us for service.

**All: If God numbers the stars, surely our names are known by the One who loves us and offers us grace. This is indeed good news for all!
Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION IN THE SEASON AFTER EPIPHANY
FEBRUARY 4, 2024**

(It is a lower-case epiphany of how precious this sacred but ordinary meal is in the lives of each congregation and of each individual. We are so grateful that, while many churches, such as Zion Church, have returned to Holy Communion in sanctuaries, most of us have members who are cautious or ill, recovering from surgery or unwilling to drive in winter weather, whose Communion is as much a part of our sacred meal as those who have come to the chapel.

We pause to invite those at home who have not already prepared elements to do so. Even an English muffin or a slice of toast can become a sacrament, even a cup of water, tea or coffee can become a remembrance of God's redeeming love).

Invitation to Communion *(Matthew 5:13-20)*

One: Come to this table, shaken like salt;
come to this table, tasty like salt –

**Many: for you have preserved old stories,
and raised the blood pressures
of those who do injustice.**

One: Come to this table, shining;
but also come with your tired old batteries –

**Many: for you have illuminated joys and sorrows,
and you have been snuffed out
and re-lit again and again.**

One: Come to this table salty like sweat
from caring for the world,
and crumpled like a bag of fries.

**Many: Come to this table, bright as a halogen headlight
and fragile as the candle flame
on a one-year-old's birthday cake.**

One: Come to this table because whoever you are,
Jesus told parables for you.

Great Prayer of Thanksgiving/Eucharistic Prayer

Leader:

For the power of love in human life and history,
we give thanks and praise.

Long ago our ancestors knew love's power
and they became the tellers of love's tale.

Love bound them in covenant,
teaching them to live in community
with compassion and concern
for the poorest among them

Yet centuries of domination and violence
shaped a different kind of community
based on selfishness and inequality.

In the struggle against oppression,
Jesus became the face of love,
showing us the way to abundant life.

In word and deed, he announced
love's new reign of justice, reconciliation, and peace.

Filled with the courage and passion of love's spirit,
he gave his life to challenge the unjust systems of this world.

Words of Remembering *(Isaiah 58:1-12)*

Leader:

We remember that Jesus quoted Isaiah
throughout the gospels –
for Christ came to lead followers
who feed those who are hungry
shelter those unhoused,
clothe those who are naked,
and comfort those who are afflicted.

Christ came to lead followers
to destroy injustices,
lift up those who are oppressed,
break the yokes of those victimized

and, at the same time,
stop pointing fingers of blame.

And we remember that Jesus
sealed the covenant

not in a fast of deprivation,
but a feast of hope
 sitting at a seder meal celebrating
 escape from oppression,
 and claiming that the new Way
 is bread and fruit and love.

Table Prayer – The Spirit Transforms

**Many: Spirit of Christ, shake on our lives
 the seasoning of love
 for Bread is Body
 and the Cup is poured for all.**

**Many: Shine on these gifts so here and so now.
 Shine on our lives today
 and give us enough for
 everyone's tomorrows.
 Amen.**

One: For this we pray in the words Jesus taught his Followers ...

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.**

The Pouring and Breaking and Serving

One: On the night of Jesus' betrayal and arrest,
 as he shared a meal with his friends,
 Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it,
 and gave it to his followers, saying

**Many: "Share this bread among you;
this is my body which will be broken for justice.
Do this to remember me."**

One: When supper was over, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it to his disciples, saying:

**Many: "Share this cup among you;
this is my blood which will be shed for liberation.
Do this to remember me."**

One: When we eat this bread and drink from this cup

Many: we experience again the presence of Jesus in our midst.

One: The table is ready. All are welcome. Come, for the feast is spread.

***Sharing of the Elements**

As the bread and cup are shared, these words are said:

One: For all your paths in the New Year,
and all the light arising on your way home,
Take this bread and eat.

Many: Amen.

One: For every meal you share with others,
and every sip you need of hope.
Take this cup and drink.

Many: Amen.

***Prayer of Thanksgiving following Communion**

God,
now that we are fed,
we recognize how many there are
who need a lighted lamp lifted so high
it may take several hands to hold it,
and who always need a taste of tomorrow
and a sip of courage for it.
We give you thanks,
for this we pray in Jesus' name.
Amen.

GOING FORTH

***Parting Hymn: NCH 419 - "Now Thank We All Our God"**

***Commissioning**

One: God sends us forth into the world,

All: so we will go to walk miles in the shoes of others.

One: Jesus calls us to serve everyone we meet,

All: so we will become all things to all people.

One: The Holy Spirit encourages us to let go of our gospel-given rights,

All: so we may breathe new life into those who are faint.

***Benediction**

May the Holy One, Creator of the end of the earth,

Lift up your spirit, bind up your soul,

And renew your strength.

Go with hope in the steadfast love of God.

Amen!

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

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Credits

- (1) The Call to Worship, Invocation, Invitation to Share our Tithes and Offerings, the Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from: *The Lifting: Service Prayers for the Fifth Sunday after Epiphany Year B*, written by The Rev. Stephanie Perdeu, PhD, Director, The Damascus Project, Shared Theological Education Ministry of the Wisconsin & Minnesota Conferences of the United Church of Christ.
- (2) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Sunday Worship Resources for February 4th, 2024*, written by Rev. Mindi Welton Mitchell, posted January 26th, 2024, on her blog, *Rev-o-lution*. <http://revo-lution.org>
- (3) The Call to Reconciliation, Prayer for Forgiveness, Assurance of Forgiveness and the Commissioning are adapted from *Liturgy and Communion from February 4th, 2024*, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted January 29th, 2024 on the blog, *Lectionary Liturgies*. <http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/>
- (4) The Introductory Words, Invitation to Communion, Words of Remembering, Table Prayer – The Spirit Transforms, Sharing of the Elements, and the Prayer of Thanksgiving following Communion, are adapted from *Celebration of Holy Communion — February 5, 2023*, by Maren C. Tirabassi, and posted January 24, 2023, on her blog, *Gifts in Open Hands* blog of Maren C. Tirabassi. <https://giftsinopenhands.wordpress.com>
- (5) The Great Prayer of Thanksgiving/Eucharistic Prayer and The Pouring and Breaking and Serving are adapted from *The Words of the Eucharist*, by Kurt Struckmeyer and posted on February 5th, 2016, on the *blog Progressive Christianity.org*. <https://progressivechristianity.org/resources/the-word-of-the-eucharist>.
- (6) 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 gender 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).

Upcoming Events:



Sunday, February 11th - Mardi Gras Sunday –

You don't have to travel to New Orleans to join in the pre-Lenten season celebration. Come worship with the community of Zion Chapel, UCC, and share in wonderful, Jazz-inspired worship...
New Orleans style.

Mardi Gras Sunday

Zion Chapel, United Church of Christ, 2700 W. 14th Street

Sunday, February 11, 2024

11 a.m. Worship

Following the worship service, all are invited to continue the celebration in The Library - Community Room, sharing in a Fat Tuesday-inspired Potluck Brunch.

Wear your purple, green and gold. Beads will be provided.



Ash Wednesday

February 14, 2024, Worship, 6:30pm

Ash Wednesday begins the Christian season of Lent. We will spend the coming days journeying with Jesus toward the cross; toward the death that ultimately brings resurrection life. Many of us will spend these coming days practicing a new spiritual discipline or giving up something that seems to be getting in the way of the life we long to live. Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of this Lenten journey.

We will come together to acknowledge our sin, to acknowledge our mortality. We come to glimpse the Christ who offers forgiveness, who offers everlasting life.

The imposition of ashes will be offered. This practice may not be familiar to everyone. Ashes have been used in Christian churches to mark the beginning of Lent since at least the 10th Century, and ashes are mentioned in scripture as a symbol of purification and repentance. We will offer the imposition of ashes as a physical reminder of our mortality and sin; an assurance of God's forgiveness and salvation.

NOTE: Traditionally the ashes are created from burning the palms used in the church on Palm Sunday. Ashes can be sent to you at your homes or apartments prior to Ash Wednesday if you wish to mark yourself or your family with the sign of the ashen cross. Please let the Pastor know if delivery is requested – 216.577.1514.

Ash Wednesday marks the start of Lent in the Western church

and takes place 46 days before Easter. As the date of Easter is calculated on the cycles of the moon, the date of Ash Wednesday will vary from year to year. The earliest possible date for Ash Wednesday is February 4th and the latest day is March 10.

Ash Wednesday is observed mainly by the Roman Catholic Church and also by some Protestant denominations such as the United Church of Christ, Methodists, Episcopalians, Presbyterians and Lutherans.

Did you know?

Lent is longer than the 40 days as Sunday was seen as a special feast day to commemorate the resurrection of Jesus on Easter Sunday, so it is excluded from the calculation of Lent. Lent is the Monday to Saturday in the six weeks before Easter Sunday (6 days x 6 weeks = 36 days) and adding the Wednesday to Saturday in the week before brings us to the 40 days.

The Orthodox Christian church has no tradition of ashes and Holy Week (the week before Easter) is excluded from the calculation of Lent, though Sundays are included. This all means that Lent begins instead on Orthodox Shrove Monday, also known as Clean Monday.

OWLS Cleveland (Older, Wiser, Livelier, Seniors)



Wednesday, February 14th, 2024, 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. at Zion UCC Church, 2700 W. 14th, join us for a Valentine Day gathering with speaker John Mahoney, Consumer Affairs Manager, Valentine Day crafts, door prizes, and valentine favors. RSVP for free lunch by phoning 216-310-6810, Beverly.

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 36 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of January 31st.

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, and brother -in-law Bob diagnosed with Crohn's disease.
- 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*)