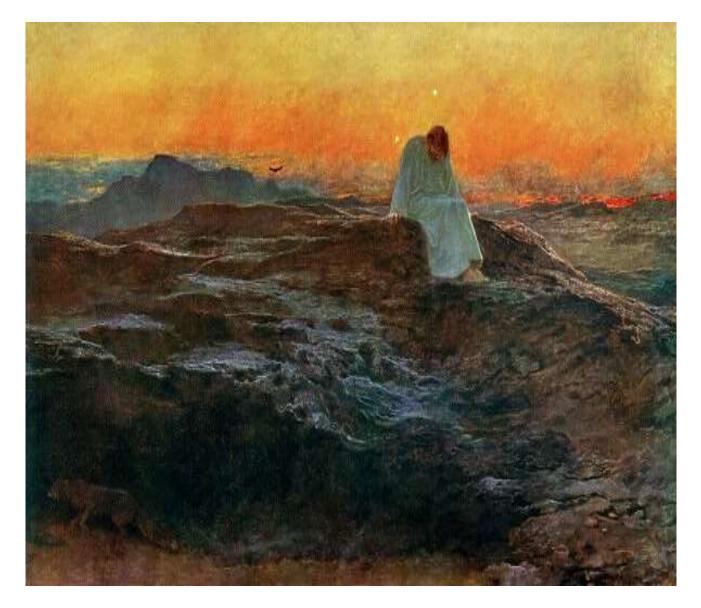
ZION UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST OF TREMONT

February 18th, 2024 First Sunday in Lent A Service of the Word



The Temptation in the Wilderness,

by Briton Riviere, 1898 (British artist of Huguenot descent) Location: Guildhall Art Gallery, City of London ; Medium: oil on canvas Google Arts and Culture https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/the-temptation-in-the-wilderness-briton-riv



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WE GATHER IN COMMUNITY

"Lent is a time of going very deeply into ourselves...What is it that stands between us and God? Between us and our brothers and sisters? Between us and life, the life of the Spirit? Whatever it is, let us relentlessly tear it out, without a moment's hesitation." -Catherine Doherty-

Welcome and Announcements

Prelude – Adam Petrosino

*Call to Worship

Leader: The voice of God proclaims of Jesus, "You are my beloved, and I love you." All: We, too, are God's beloved children, loved and embraced.

- Leader: With all the voices reminding us that we are not enough or don't belong, it is tempting to forget our place in God's Kin-dom.
- All: With the waters of baptism and the voice of God's promises, we can face the temptations of any wilderness or desert that would draw us away from the Source of our hope.

*Gathering Prayer

God of waters and deserts, God of hope and horizons, we celebrate your presence among us and among all your people. You have proclaimed that Jesus was beloved and, tenderly, you have claimed us as your own. Open the skies. Break through the clouds. Fall softly upon our shoulders and say our names with joy. For this day and each day, no matter what the other voices may say, we are your beloved and we rejoice in your in-breaking Kin-dom. Amen and Amen!

*Gathering Hymn: NCH 193 – "In the Cross of Christ I Glory"

Lenten Candle Liturgy

First Sunday in Lent

Meditation

Extinguish one of the Lenten candles

*Hymn: NCH 207 – "Just As I Am" – (one verse)

Just As I Am Text: Charlotte Elliott, 1836; alt. Tune: WOODWORTH L.M. Composer: William B. Bradbury, 1849 Reprinted with permission under ONE LICENSE #A-736636. All rights reserved.

> 1 Just as I am, without one plea but that your blood was shed for me, and that you called inviting me, O Lamb of God, I come, I come!

Lenten Candle Prayer

One: Let us pray:

Many: Loving God, as we journey through this holy season of Lent, give us strength and courage to make the changes that are needed in our lives. Open our hearts and minds to your steadfast presence and help us to put our trust in you. Amen.

A READING OF THE WORD

First Reading: Genesis 9:8-17

During Lent, the selections from the Hebrew Scriptures focus on stories of God's covenant. For the first Sunday in Lent, the story is of the covenant between God and Noah and all of creation all flesh—that God will never again destroy the earth by flood. The sign of this covenant to Noah and all future generations is the rainbow—God's weapon. God has hung up the bow and will no longer make war on creation. This covenant to the people showed how God was different than the other gods, and how God will remember on their part that they are not a God who makes war on the people or the creatures of the earth. **9** 8 God then said to Noah and his family, 9 "I hereby establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you, 10 and with every living creature that is with you—birds, cattle, and the earth's wildlife—everything that came out of the ark, everything that lives on the earth. 11 I hereby establish my covenant with you: All flesh will never again be swept away by the waters of the flood; never again will a flood destroy all the earth."

12 God said, "Here is the sign of the covenant between me and you and every living creature for ageless generations: 13 I set my bow in the clouds, and it will be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth. 14 When I bring clouds over the earth, my bow will appear in the clouds. 15 Then I will remember the covenant that is between me and you and every kind of living creature, and never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all flesh.16 Whenever my bow appears in the clouds I will see it, and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature on the earth." 17 God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all living things on the earth."

Psalm Response: Psalm 25: 1-10 (Responsively)

Psalm 25 is a song of trust in God. The psalmist desires to draw closer to God's ways, and prays for deliverance from their enemies. While they long for a response from God to their situation, they also pray that God would not hold against them their previous sins. Instead, the psalmist focuses on the goodness of God, and how those who keep God's faithfulness will know God's steadfast love.

- 25 1 To you, O God,
 I lift up my soul.
 2 My God, I trust in you;
 don't let me be ashamed,
 don't let my enemies triumph over me.
- 3 No—none who hope in you will be ashamed, but shame will come to the wantonly treacherous.
- 4 Show me your ways, God! Teach me your paths!
- 5 Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation. I wait all the day long for you.
- 6 Remember your mercies, God, your love your ancient and unwavering love!
- 7 Pardon the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; remember me because of your love, because of your goodness, God!
- 8 And how good and upright you are, God! You instruct sinners in the path,

9 you guide those who are humble in what is right,

and teach them your way.
10 All of your paths, God,
are full of love and faithfulness
for those who keep your Covenant and Testimonies.

Second Reading: 1 Peter 3: 18-22

The author of 1 Peter 3 writes in verses 18-22 how Christ's suffering for sins unites all believers to God. Christ descended into the place of the dead, "the spirits in prison," to proclaim the good news. The writer of this letter also interprets the story of Noah as a story of baptism, saving all of humanity before Noah from their sins through the floodwaters, and now baptism saves the believers who are alive.

3 18 The reason Christ died for sins once for everyone—the just for the sake of the unjust—was in order to lead you to God. Jesus was put to death in the flesh but was given life in the Spirit. 19 And in the Spirit, Jesus went and preached to the imprisoned spirits. 20 They had refused obedience long ago, while God waited patiently in the days of Noah and the building of the ark, in which a few persons, eight in all, were brought to safety through the water. 21 That water prefigured the water of baptism through which you are now brought to safety. Baptism is not the washing away of physical dirt, but the appeal made to God by a good conscience: it brings salvation through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, 22 who entered heaven and is now at the right hand of God, having dominion over angelic authorities and powers.

Gospel Reading: Mark 1:9-15

Mark's account of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness is scant on the details, so the Gospel lesson also includes Jesus' baptism before he went into the wilderness, and the beginning of his ministry in Galilee, in these verses. Again, all three of these stories are expanded in Matthew and Luke. Mark simply lets us know that before Jesus began his ministry, he was baptized by John the Baptizer; he was affirmed by God as the Beloved, God's Own; he was driven into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit, and he was tempted by Satan. Jesus had all of these experiences happen to him, and then, Jesus went and proclaimed the Gospel, that the reign of God had come near. The action shifts, and Jesus knows he must go out on his own, as baptized, affirmed, and driven by the Spirit. How our past experiences shape us into sharing the Gospel may be one angle in which to reflect upon this story.

1 9 It was then that Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized in the Jordan River by John. 10 Immediately upon coming out of the water, Jesus saw the heavens opening and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 Then a voice came from the heavens: "You are my Beloved, my Own. On you my favor rests."

12 Immediately the Spirit drove Jesus out into the wilderness,13 and he remained there for forty days, and was tempted by Satan. He was with the wild beasts, and the angels looked after him. *

14 After John's arrest, Jesus appeared in Galilee proclaiming the Good News of God:

15 "This is the time of fulfillment. The reign of God is at hand! Change your hearts and minds, and believe this Good News!"

Reflection – "Even a Dangerous Desert Can Become Holy" - Rev. Scott Rosenstein

WE RESPOND

*Prayer of Response

God, as we take this journey that draws us ever closer to you, Walk with us Sustain us, Nurture us.

God, as we go through the wilderness of Lent and of our lives, send your manna to us, give us wisdom to turn from temptation and your grace to turn to.

God, as we walk through the pot holes of life, the valleys, the pits of life, guide us with your hand. Keep our feet steady, and our vision on you.

God, whether we choose to give up something for Lent or do something positive, let us not do it out of obligation or the tyranny of oughtness, but out of love for you.

Keep us in your paths of love, mercy and grace. Lord help us to remember we are not alone but that we are walking with our fellows - brother and sister travelers. Amen

*Hymn of Response: "When We are Tested" - (sung to the tune of NCH 451 – "Be Now My Vision)

When We Are Tested Text: Ruth Duck, b. 1947. © 1996, Hope Publishing Company. Tune: SLANE 10.10.9.10 1 When we are tested and wrestle alone, famished for bread when the world offers stone, nourish us, God, by your word and your way, food that sustains us by night and by day.

2 When in the desert we cry for relief, pleading for paths marked by certain belief, lift us to love you beyond sign and test, trusting your presence, our only true rest.

3 When we are tempted to barter our souls, trading the truth for the pow'r to control, teach us to worship and praise only you, seeking your will in the work that we do.

4 When we have struggled and searched through the night, sorting and sifting the wrong from the right, Savior, surround us with circles of care, angels of healing, of hope, and of prayer.

*Invitation to Share Our Tithes and Offerings

Our generosity is born out of our identity in a God whose love is unending and offered to all. In gratitude and joy, we are invited to share a portion of our treasure to ensure that all may come to know of this love of God that never ends.

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

Abundant God, receive these gifts of love from your servants and use them for the breaking in of your reign of love and light. In the name of Jesus, whose way calls us forth in service, we pray. Amen.

Choir Hymn: NCH 197 – "Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross"

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

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 190 – "Beneath the Cross of Jesus"

*Commissioning

One: Trusting in God, let us go from this place. All: Taught all we need, we will bring hope and peace to others.

One: Trusting in Jesus, let us go into the world. All: Given all we need, we will go to serve those around us.

One: Trusting in the Spirit, we will not be tempted to stay, so let us go. All: Baptized in hope, we will go to welcome others as God's Beloved.

*Benediction

Go forth to claim your belovedness, trusting that the God who provided Jesus with strength to overcome the temptations of the desert is the very God who will guide you and lead you this day and always. 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, and the Blessing of the Gifts, and the Benediction are adapted from *Temptation: Service Prayers for the First Sunday in Lent Year B was written by The Rev. Dr. Chad Abbot, Conference Minister in the Indiana-Kentucky Conference.* Permission given to reproduce or adapt this material for use in services of worship or church education. All rights reserved.
- (2) The Lenten Candle Liturgy is adapted from *Lenten Candle Liturgy First Sunday in Lent*, posted May 27, 2015, on the blog *Process & Faith*. https://processandfaith.org/lenten-candle-liturgy
- (3) The Prayer of Response is adapted from *Prayer for Lent 1*, written by Rev. Abi, and posted on *Rev. Abi's Long and Winding Road blog.* http://vicarofwadley.blogspot.com/ Reposted in February, 2012 as *Prayer for the First Sunday in Lent*, on the blog, *re:Worship.* https://re-worship.blogspot.com/2012/02/prayer-for-first-sunday-in-lent.html
- (4) The Commissioning is adapted from Liturgy and Communion from February 18h, 2024, The First Sunday in Lent-B, written by Thom M. Shuman, and posted February 12th, 2024, on the blog, Lectionary Liturgies. http://lectionaryliturgies.blogspot.com/
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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. 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 season of Lent

The day of Ashes marked the opening of Lent in the liturgical season. For six- and one-half weeks, Christians around the world will prepare themselves spiritually for the celebration of their highest Holy Day: Easter. Many of us will take on spiritual disciplines – prayer, charity, and fasts (make personal sacrifices), focusing through these long days on the sacrifices Jesus made as he set his face toward Jerusalem.

The liturgical calendar is asking us to do this in the Lenten season: prepare ourselves spiritually for our collective celebration of life overcoming death.

The season of Lent invites introspection, an inward act, that often gets made concrete through spiritual disciplines, action, to reinforce their meaning and to translate them into a way of living. If the spiritual transformation is missing, however, the actions become meaningless and a mockery. Repentance, reconciliation, and repair require an inward transformation of mind, body, and spirit - represented by the heart. In ancient Hebrew tradition, the heart reflected more than emotional response; it encompasses both reason and feelings in an integrated fashion.

To rend one's heart is to deliberately open ourselves to revitalized thoughts, attitudes, and emotions. It is to become vulnerable and malleable.

Other faith traditions have something very similar to this: whether it is the arduous month-long fast of Ramadan practiced by Muslims, the 24 hours of fasting practiced by the Jewish people dur-ing the annual time of Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), or the various means of using fasting for spiritual awakening by many Native American tribes. It seems almost universally accepted that an intentional and thoughtful act of self-sacrifice can not only deepen spiritual connections with the Sacred, but also make us all more mindful of the excesses with which we are prone to live and grow oblivious to.

No matter what your spiritual pathway is, or how you explore and deepen connections to the Sacred, take time to assess your spiritual health. Discover ways that the entrapments of this world burden you – whether in the ongoing and seemingly insatiable pursuit of treasures and pleasures that attract, or in the simple fact that such treasures and pleasures, once acquired, only serve to distract us from our higher callings.

Open yourself up to the ancient rituals that invite us to turn away from things that distract us from, or learn anew spiritual disciplines that focus us on, spiritual awakening.

During this season of Lent, may you be encouraged to lighten your load if it be overladen with excesses that distract; may you be invited into times of spiritual wholeness that come when we are less distracted; and may the Eastertide find you ready to celebrate once again the joy of life over-coming death. May you deepen your relationship with the Sacred on this, your journey Into the Mystic.

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 (mini Easters), 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.



Rest and Resilience Following the Way of Jesus through Lent

A daily devotional spanning Ash Wednesday through Easter guides readers through Lent with weekly themes of retreat, prayer, honest, compassion, creativity, and community

When Jesus was preparing for a new phase of his ministry — or experiencing the final week — he went to Bethany, his holy retreat. Following that tradition, The Bethany Fellowships, a ministry of support for young clergy and congregations, have cultivated an in-

tentional rhythm of life and ministry that empowers community, creativity, prayer, and resilience. This six-week-long Lenten daily devotional follows practices and relationships Jesus models for us throughout his ministry, bringing us to the biblical town of Bethany to encourage retreat, prayer, honesty, compassion, creativity, and community. The diverse contributor based is comprised of ordained ministers in a variety of denominations and ministry settings, many of whom are in their first few years of congregational leadership.

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 50 mass shooting incidents occurred in the US in 2024 as of February 15th.

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.)

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 and has undergone surgery from Crohn's disease and is out of ICU and recovering.
- 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)