

**WELCOME TO
Old Zionsville United Church of Christ
5981 Fountain Road, P.O. Box 215
Old Zionsville, PA 18068**

Email: ozuccoffice@ptd.net Web page: www.oldzionsucc.org
Church Office: 610-966-3601
Pastor: 610-393-3522 or 610-966-3436

<u>Rev. Lori Esslinger</u>	<u>Pastor</u>
<u>David Carlson</u>	<u>Organist</u>
<u>December 21, 2025</u>	<u>10:15am</u>

**those who are able may stand*

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Enthroned by Love

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: "He Is Born, the Holy Child"

(Paxton)

Welcome and Announcements

Lighting of the Altar Candles

We Gather at the Scene

Leader: As we have ventured "beyond the lullaby" to unpack the circumstances surrounding the birth of Jesus, we have encountered a continuing human saga—one in which lullaby is met with lament for all that is not right with this world. But as we prepare for the celebration of the birth soon upon us, we are reminded that what also endures in the human story is the presence of hope beyond hopelessness, peace beyond understanding, and joy beyond despair. This is all made possible through the steadfast love of God-with-us.

Sung:

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**So bring Him incense, gold, and myrrh,
Come, peasant, king to own Him.
The King of kings salvation brings;
Let loving hearts enthrone Him.**

Lighting of the Advent Wreath:

Cheryl Martucci, Consistory President
and son McGwire Martucci

Leader: When we hear "let loving hearts enthrone him" in our theme carol, we are encountering the "essence of the message." Love is at the heart of this beloved story of the birth of Christ. It is love that is the true definition of "kingdom," of "kinship." No one exemplifies this more than Joseph's love for Mary and for the child. He is protector of Love; he is hospitality incarnated. Not only the very life of Jesus was in his hands, but his own character and sacrifice were influential in the way that Jesus went on to live his life and center "love for all" as his message.

Reader 1: We light this candle of Love for those who need it most.

Reader 2: For all who feel they are on the outskirts of love.

Reader 1: For all who know the loss of a love.

Reader 2: For all who are rejected because of who they are.

Reader 1: Our question for today at the scene of the nativity is this: "How will we make sacrificial love our aim in our time?"

Reader 2: What child IS this? This, this, is the babe who was swaddled in love and wraps us all in love forever.

Sung:

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**This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!**

Showing our Church Families' Nativities

A Gift of Music: Susan Kohler on Saxophone

Prayer of Invocation (unison)

**Here, at the nativity of your birth,
give us the courage to face this moment
with a steadfast love that casts out fear.
Open us to new understandings of
the unfolding story of your presence among us.
Show us how to be with and for one another
in ways that add to the flourishing of all creation.
We pray in the name of the Child,
the Love Enthroned in our hearts and lives.
Amen.**

Bring Him Laud

*Opening Hymn: "O How Shall I Receive You"

see insert

Proclaiming

We open ourselves to the full story of Christ's birth, knowing that his story is the ground of our faith and the light for our path.

We Hear the Story

Reader: The story of Joseph is told most clearly in the Gospel according to Matthew. Today we join the story in Matthew 1:18-25 as Joseph must decide what to do when Mary becomes pregnant. In the book, *The First Advent in Palestine*, author Kelley Nikondeha says this: “[Joseph] entered into her disgrace... They shouldered the shame together... God had invited him into the heart of the divine deliverance operation—along with its social stigma. Indeed, following the unborn Christ already had consequences.” Hear now the beginning of the story of Jesus’ saving love.

Scripture Matthew 1:18-25

Sermon

Responding

Our faithful response is to praise God for this story of Emmanuel, God-With-Us, even and especially in the midst of difficulty, for God is indeed with us even still.

“We Keep Watch” – Prayers

“Great Holy One”

Brian Wren and Susan Heafield

Sung by congregation:

**Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

Leader: In this moment of silent contemplation, we lift up our hopes for the world, for its people, for the kind of kin-dom embodied by the child who was Love Incarnate. **[You have a sticky-note and we invite you to write a word or phrase—a love note to the world— that we can add to our Nativity set for Baby Jesus)**

Time of Silent Contemplation

Spoken in Unison:

**Awesome one, how shall we meet you?
In the wisdom of a child, in opponents reconciled?
When you meet with sudden kindness,
find my holy place in your neighbor’s face.”**

Sung by congregation:

**Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

Pastoral Prayer

We give you thanks, O God, this day for...

We name our sorrow this day for...

We ask for your forgiveness this day for...

Be with us as we seek to be the Body of Christ in the world.

We pray this in the way you taught us, saying...

*The Lord's Prayer

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

Sung by congregation and choir:

**Great, Holy One, spreading time and space,
show us who You are in a human face.**

"So Bring Him..."

(Offering)

What gifts are adequate for the Child Enthroned by Love? 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 coffers of precious resources, we give what we can. In this way we "take ownership" of our role in the scene, in the unfolding story of Love. (**please place your completed sticky notes in the offering plate.**)

Offertory: "Angels from the Realms of Glory"

(Smart)

*Presentation of our Gifts and The Doxology

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

Blessing of our Offering

Choir Anthem

Sending Forth

Just as our theme carol asks, "what child is this?" we, too, have come with our questions this day. We go into the world with answers of Good News, being the Body of Christ through our words and deeds.

We Ask, We Answer

As we prepare to go into the world,
let us ask and answer the question we came with.

What child IS this?

This is the one surrounded by sacrificial love.

What child IS this?

This is the one who would go on to great sacrifice in the name of love.

What child IS this?

This, this is the one "Enthroned by Love"
who invites us into more love than we thought was possible.

*Closing Hymn: "Love Came Down at Christmas"

(see insert)

Benediction

May our Gracious God,
the Child of Love,
the Spirit of Resistance to Injustice
be with you now and as you go.

All: Amen.

Sung Response:

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**This, this is Christ, the King,
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing:
Haste, haste to bring Him laud,
The Babe, the Son of Mary!**

*Extinguishing of the Candles

Postlude: "Good Christian Men, Rejoice"

(Varner)



<http://www.worshipdesignstudio.com/whatchild>

Our Christmas Eve services are at 3 p.m. with communion, carols, and candles. 7 p.m. with a Choir Cantata, carols and candles. Bring your friends and family.

Next Sunday, Dec. 28, No Sunday School. Hymn Sing worship at 10:15am

TODAY'S GREETER is Ethel Hollenbach.

TODAY'S LITURGIST is Jan Strobel.

TODAY'S ALTAR FLOWERS are sponsored by the Richards-Brown family in memory of Dorothy & Ronald Richards.

TODAY'S BULLETIN is sponsored by Paula Lilly in honor of her children and grandchildren.

We thank Cheryl Martucci, Consistory President, and son McGwire Martucci for Lighting our Fourth Advent Candle today.

RESTROOMS ARE AVAILABLE on the main floor of the Church and downstairs.
Bulletin MAGNIFIER SHEETS can be found on the sound system.



Our church is equipped with an Assistive Listening System. You provide your own headphones which can be connected to the transmitter which will allow you to more clearly hear the Worship Service or any program being offered in the Sanctuary. See anyone at the sound booth to inquire.

Greeters and Liturgists Needed. If you would like to get on our schedule to help in our Worship Services by being a Greeter or Liturgist, please contact the church office. Email and phone number are on front page or put a note in the Secretary's mailbox. Thank you.

Supper Club

When: Wednesday January 7, 2026, 6:00 PM

Where: Delizioso Italian Grill

1985 Brookside Rd., Macungie

RSVP by Sunday 1/4/2026

Sunday Brunchers

When: Sunday January 18, 2026, ~ 12 Noon

Where: Mercantile Club

Railroad St., Emmaus

CASH ONLY

RSVP by Wednesday 1/14/2026

Lunch Bunch

When: Friday January 30, 2026, 12 Noon

Where: East Penn Diner

1418 Chestnut Street, Emmaus

RSVP by Sunday 1/25/2026

Share the Warmth

Again, this year we will be collecting items to warm someone from the inside. All items will be donated to support the Zionsville Area Food Pantry.

Beginning in December 2025 and through January 2026 we will be collecting the following items: Tea bags, Coffee (regular and/or decaf --- NOT coffee beans, which need to be ground; NOT K-cups), Soup, Hot chocolate. Please note: Tea and Coffee are especially needed.

January Soup & Sandwich – Social and Aid Committee will be making Chicken Corn Soup with homemade egg noodles for the month of January to order along with their Ham & Cheese Sandwiches. Orders forms will be available soon. Orders must be received by Sunday, January 4. Pickup will be on Thursday, January 22 from 3:30-5:00pm.

January All Things Free Giveaway - Monday, January 12, 2026 from 4:00pm-6:00pm Or Saturday, January 17, 2026 from 10:00am-12 noon

We will have: Valentine's Day Items, Housewares, Winter Clothing, and More.

Week of December 22 through January 2:

Pastor Lori will have office hours on Wednesday, December 24,
from 10am-3pm.

Other times by appointment

**Pastor Lori will be on vacation December 26 through January 1.
She will be at the December 28 worship service.**

Church Secretary Hours: Mon. 12/29 & Tues. 12/30 9am-2pm,
Fri. 1/2 (To Be Determined)
(please call before coming to make sure she is in the office)

**Ellie will be on vacation December 22 through 26, December 31 &
January 1.**

**Friday 12/24: Christmas Eve Service 3pm
Christmas Eve Service 7pm**

Thursday 12/25: Christmas Day

Wed. 12/31: New Year's Eve

Thurs. 1/1: New Year's Day

Sexton: Richard Shoemaker (with Thanks to his wife, Brenda)

Next Sunday —No Sunday School
10:15 am Worship, Hymn Sing

Offering information not available due to staff vacation schedules.