

Zoar Church (LCMC)  
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## **Zoar Church Winter Newsletter 2026**

### **Ash Wednesday**

Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, falls on February 18th this year. It is a wonderful time to prepare our hearts, minds and spirits for the celebration of Easter. Ashes are used as an outward sign of our sinfulness and mortality; it is a time of repentance and recommitment to our faith. Please join for soup supper and receiving of ashes after supper on February 18th.

### **Celebration of Easter**

Easter falls on April 5th this year and we will celebrate both on Good Friday, April 3rd, at 6pm and on Sunday April 5th at 9:30. Kids will have Children's Church on Easter Sunday. Please join us for worship on Good Friday to celebrate Jesus' victory over sin and Easter to celebrate His victory over death!



**Sunday service: 9:30 Sanctuary & streaming on Facebook**

**Church office hours: Friday 8am-11am**

**Pastor's office hours: by appointment 218-663-7925**

**Zoar Church, Tofte, MN is affiliated with Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ**

# The Beacon

ZOAR CHURCH PARISH NEWS

*A Beacon of Hope on the North Shore*



## Pastor's Corner

### Don't Worry; Don't Judge

*~Pastor Al Alexander~*



Through His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus taught His followers many remarkable things. Two that have particular application in this time of political divide are: do not worry and do not judge.

**So, about worry** – Matthew 6:25 records (along with other verses) that Jesus tells His followers, ‘do not worry’. In fact, worry and faith are inversely related; the more you worry the less faith you have and, the more faith you have the less you will worry. Now, don’t confuse worry and concern. Worry is emotional, dwelling on “what ifs”. Worry can paralyze you, lead to stress, and mentally drain you. Concern is rational; it is action-oriented awareness of a potential problem. Concern focuses on what’s controllable. Worry just wrings its hands and frets.

A concerned person who sees water dripping from the ceiling gets a bucket to catch the water and makes a plan to fix the roof. A worrier stares at the puddle, frets about the roof, fears the potential damage and stresses about losing the house!

Jesus tells us to face our problems, act on what we can control then leave the rest to God and trust Him for the solution. And Jesus will help you, but you need to ask and work with Him. Maybe the solution is getting off social media, quit watching the news or, like me, avoid watching certain content on TV that causes you to worry when you have absolutely no hope of fixing it.

**And about judging** – In one verse (of several), Matthew 7:1, Jesus tells His followers in no uncertain terms, “Do not judge”. We, as believers, are not to judge another person’s salvation or their heart. While we may see wrong actions; we are not to call another evil or feel justified to hate them. Here are twelve reasons not to judge other people:

It’s easy to misjudge the situation

You may not have all the facts

You don’t really understand another person’s weakness

You cannot fully understand the difficulty of a person’s situation

You may not understand another’s motivation

Some judge others as an excuse to avoid doing the right thing

Some judge when they actually have the same fault

Some judge to avoid dealing with their own faults

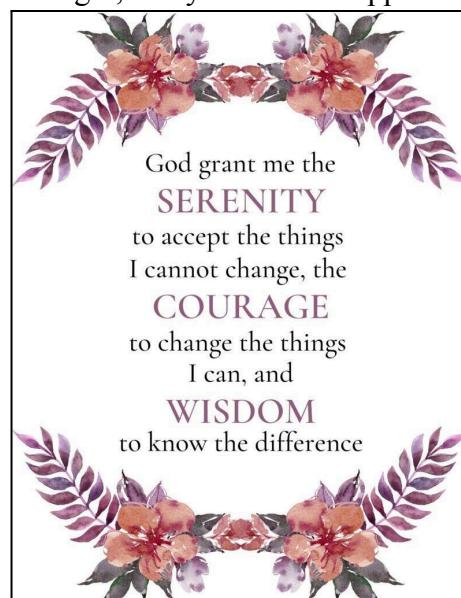
Sometimes it makes us feel superior to judge another. That’s called prejudice.

Some judgment is gossip. Gossip is evil (not the person, the action).

You are not better than the person you are judging

You are not impartial

God is the righteous Judge. So please, follow hard after Jesus, pray for your enemies, replace worry with faith and treat others with love and mercy. You will sleep better at night, and you will be happier.



## Upcoming Winter/Spring Message Series

Pastor Al continues preaching through the Gospel of Matthew (a multi-year project). The Gospel of Matthew is an eyewitness account of Jesus' teachings, miracles, prophecies and fulfilled prophecies. During January and February, we will complete Jesus' Sermon on the Mount which is Jesus' teaching to His followers how He wants us to live our lives and what He expects our character and attitudes to be. This seems especially timely in these chaotic and disturbing times. We can all benefit from examining our own hearts and behavior and focusing on Jesus' instructions to us.

Following the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew recounts some of Jesus' more famous miracles like calming the storm, casting out demons and forgiving the sins of a paralyzed man. Please join us each Sunday for worship at 9:30 am in the sanctuary (also Live streaming on Facebook). Come inside where it's warm and stick around for treats, coffee and great fellowship following the service.

### Zoar Calendar

- Sundays 9:30 am – Zoar Worship Service, Gospel of Matthew
- Tuesdays 3:00-4:00 pm – Community Bible Study, James.
  - No Bible Study on February 3rd
- February 8 - All Church Sunday (worship and brunch)
- Wednesdays - Bible Club 3:15-4:30 pm through May 6, 2026
- March 25 - No Bible Club or Soup Supper (Spring Break)
- Wednesdays - Soup Supper Serving 5:15-6 pm through May 6, 2026
- Video Streaming "The Chosen" each week following Soup Supper
- No Soup Supper on March 25
- Sunday, February 15 – KID FRIENDLY Service (3rd Sundays of each month)
- Ash Wednesday February 18 – Imposition of ashes following Soup Supper for those desiring (No Chosen video)
- Friday, April 3, 2026 - Good Friday service at 6:00 pm
- Sunday, April 5, 2026 – Easter Sunday
- Sunday, May 31, 2026 at 8:00 am – Church on the Rocks begins! (and continues through September 13)

## All Church Sunday February 8th

We invite you to join us February 8th for another "All Church" Sunday. If you are a regular attender or viewer or just appreciate Zoar Church's presence in the community, we strongly encourage you to join us and show your support at the 9:30 Worship Service.

The good news is that each Sunday around 200 people are part of Zoar's worship; the bad news, only around 25 to 30 come to the sanctuary. We're really glad to offer the service online. Many of you simply cannot be physically present due to location, work, sickness or other factors. And we sure would rather have you attend online rather than not at all.

But there are important reasons to be physically present on Sunday Mornings. Worship and fellowship are simply better in person. Sunday mornings are an opportunity to connect with friends or make new friends! It is also an opportunity to receive encouragement and love from fellow believers and, even more importantly, it is a time when you can encourage and show love to others in the Zoar community.

Jesus expects His followers to minister to each other, fellowship with each other, show love to each other (John 13:14) and serve each other (Mark 10:43-45). Finally, it's commanded by Scripture, "Do not give up meeting together" (Hebrews 10:25).

So please join us on February 8th for our "All Church" service. As an added incentive, we are serving brunch after the service. We look forward to seeing you!

### Community Bible Study



This winter, Zoar's Community Bible Study continues its verse-by-verse study of the book of James. For this class, we are using a video series by a

gifted teacher, Gary Hamrick, as well as comments and review by Pastor Al.

The overall message of James - if you're going to be a Christian by belief you need to be a Christian by your actions. James provides practical teaching to Christians on trials and temptations, faith and deeds, speech, wisdom and prayer.

PLEASE NOTE NEW TIME: In deference to the cold and dark of winter, we're now meeting Tuesdays from 3-4 pm at the church or via Zoom video meeting. (To join via Zoom, send your email address to Linda at [lmsalexand@gmail.com](mailto:lmsalexand@gmail.com) and she will send you email invites each week.)

## Wycliffe International

### ~ February Mission Project ~

This February Zoar supports Wycliffe Bible Translators. Wycliffe is an interdenominational nonprofit organization with a goal "for people from every language to understand the Bible and be transformed." Zoar has had a number of connections with Wycliffe throughout the years.

## Chosen People Ministries

### ~ March Mission Project ~



Messiah. Zoar donations go to the regional center in the Twin Cities and Duluth to support those Jewish communities and further understanding of Jesus.

Chosen People Ministries is a mission to Jewish people around the world to support their community and culture and teach about Jesus the

## Global Health Ministries

### ~ April Mission Project ~

Throughout the year Zoar Church supports several missions and ministries locally and throughout the world. All of these have some sort of connection to our congregation. The ministry we will support in April is Global Health Ministries (GHM), a program a former Zoar pastor has been with for several years. GHM is a non-profit, volunteer-powered organization that supports global Lutheran efforts in healthcare.



This month, mission donations to GHM will be directed to their work in El Salvador.

GHM works with volunteer Community Health Promoters

(CHP) to provide first aid supplies and basic hygiene kits so that the CHP can teach the communities about first aid, sanitation, malaria prevention, reproductive health, and nutrition.

## Mission Highlights

Bishop Kishore is one of the missionaries Zoar has supported over the past several years. He has blessed us when he visits with Indian food and inspiring sermons. Bishop Kishore is responsible for planting 17 churches in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh; each church reaches more than 200 people at weekly worship services. Recently we learned Bishop Kishore was invited to speak to a group of over 1500 at an open air meeting (maybe something like a Billy Graham event) and he personally baptized more than 11 people. This is remarkable in a country where less than 5% of people are Christians.

Zoar is proud to be able to support God's work through Bishop Kishore's ministry. Please pray for his churches and pastors as Christian persecution has been increasing in Andhra Pradesh. Churches and Christian evangelists have been attacked, including a recent incident where a minibus carrying evangelists was destroyed.

On other missions news, Zoar was pleased to be able to provide hats and mittens to Safe Haven Shelter in Duluth. We're on track to deliver 20+ pairs of new wool socks, gently used wool hats and more thanks to the generosity of those clearing out their storage. These items will go a long way to helping those in need.

