



The Saltshaker

February 2026

Kokomo Zion Church

Pastor Keith Chanley

It seems hard to believe that already a month has passed by and we are well into a New Year. As I was thinking about what to write I found an old article from when Bishop Mike Coyner was the Indiana Bishop, December 2016. He is addressing the emotions around entering Advent and the Christmas season, but I think they are still applicable today and on this side of a new year. You have heard me say "How we live matters." Herb Buwalda takes it from a bit of a different angle but his point is spot on.

"Living as One of the Convinced

Recently one of our excellent Indiana Conference pastors, Herb Buwalda, used an interesting phrase that has captivated me. We were talking about all of the terminology which various churches use about reaching the "lost" or the "unchurched" or the "seekers." None of those terms seems to fully capture the essence of the difference it makes to live one's life as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Herb offered this thought: Since many people in our culture claim to believe in God, the real issue is not belief. It is being convinced that this belief can and should make a difference in my life. It is, he said, all about "living as one of the convinced."

I think he is onto something. During this season of Advent and Christmas, we will hear and see lots of what might be called "cultural Christianity" as people give lip service to the birth of Christ and to their belief in God. Our American culture loves to feel good about Christmas, and there will be TV specials, community programs, and decorations to honor our belief in Christ.

But ... and here is Herb's point ... will any of that make any difference in how most people actually live their lives? Sure, most people say they believe in God (according to the Gallup study "The Unchurched American" nearly 90% of Americans claim to believe), and a vast majority even express belief in Jesus and his resurrection (over 2/3 according to that same Gallup study). But when it comes to living our lives as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ, those "beliefs" seldom translate into action. It seems that most people believe in the basics of the Christian faith, but they are not convinced that such belief should really guide and change their life.

The real danger of this season is not "Bah-humbug" of those who oppose Christmas, it is the "Ho-hum" indifference to the true essence of the Incarnation.

We have an opportunity as Christians during this Advent/Christmas season to do deeper. We have an opportunity to explore how we can live like those who are convinced that Jesus makes a difference in our lives and in our world.

We have an opportunity to live as one of the convinced."

--Bishop Mike Coyner

So, as we continue through 2026, let us live as one of the convinced. Let us do so that God is glorified and people are drawn to Jesus. Have a happy, blessed and convinced 2026. --
Pastor Keith

MISSIONS

Dear friends, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers and sisters, even though they are strangers to you.
3 John 1:5

Mission 50 update

Thanks to the continued generosity of the Kokomo Zion congregation, our Mission 50 program had a very good year in 2025. Not only did all of the 16 mission programs and missionaries reach their goal of support, every program exceeded the amount that the mission committee had set as a target. The total amount raised for the Mission 50 programs in 2025 was \$27,425.

As believers, we are called to actively spread God's word and love to make a positive difference in the world, whether it be to neighbors who live close by or strangers in another country. We are doing that by our strong support of missions.

The missions committee wishes to thank everyone for their generous gifts and has decided there will be no changes to the Mission 50 programs we are supporting in 2026.



Grace Bauson will be featured harpist with the Kokomo Symphony Orchestra on their February 21st concert Love and Tragedy. This moving program will leave you captivated by the beauty and tragedy woven into each piece. The concert is at 7pm in Havens Auditorium on the campus of Indiana University Kokomo. Tickets are \$25 and \$23 for seniors. They can be purchased at the door, online at www.kokomosymphony.net, or by calling 765-236-0251.



We love because he first loved us.
1 John 4:19 NRSV

Matt's Concert
Songs of Love
February 15th
3:00 PM
Invite your friends!



We'll meet February 2 and 16 and March 2 and 16. This Monday we will finish Psalm 119 and celebrate Scripture! Bring a finger food and a favorite verse to share. See you at 10:00 AM.

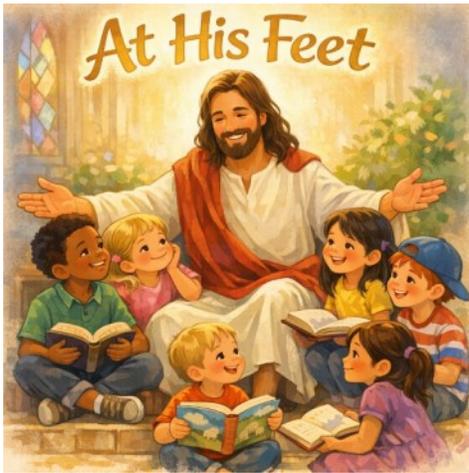
Zion Family,

After long talks, prayer and decisions, Teri Lavengood & I have volunteered to lead the children's ministry here at Zion. We have ideas aplenty & cannot wait to put them into motion! We are thankful and grateful for this opportunity!

First, I want to introduce myself for those that are new and unfamiliar with me. I am a lifelong Zion member, mom of 6 (17 down to 1)! Within the last year and a half, I heard God calling me into ministry. My husband, Jeff, and I discussed what that looked like and how we would answer that call. I resigned from a full-time job to stay at home with our kiddos, and return to school, pursuing my degree in Ministry—I will graduate in May 2027 (right along with our oldest!)

Teri has been a part of Zion for many years as well, currently serving also as the custodian of the church. She holds a degree in ministry from Indiana Wesleyan University and has a great passion for helping alongside me revamp and rebuild the program for the kids and youth of Zion. Teri's passion for serving the community and the children of our church is a great asset.

Teri and I are open to all honest communication from adults and kids alike, we want to hear YOU! We are here for the children of Zion, but we need input from parents (or grandparents) as well.



This will be a rebuilding time for Zion's children and youth ministry program, starting first and foremost with our Sunday morning programming. This is where we really need support from as many people that feel called into helping with the children.

We currently see, on average, 3 to 8 children from ages 1-10 on Sunday mornings. **IF** you feel called to help us with the kids on Sunday mornings during worship, please see myself, Teri or Pastor Keith. We do ask for safety regulations that you be willing to submit to a background check. I will also have a sign-up sheet in the foyer for any interested.

At this time, we often do not have enough volunteers to separate the kids ideally by age range. We usually have everyone together in one room, unless enough background checked people volunteer to help. We would like to have 2 adults for 0-24 months in the Nursery, 2 adults for 3 & 4 year olds, and 2 adults for 5-10 year olds for junior church.

For Sunday mornings, there is a small lesson plan, which I will have provided to you the week prior to your volunteering. I would like to have enough people willing to help with the kids that we can go on a rotation schedule, and one person is not doing it for months.

I would also like to get the 7th-12th grade kids involved in something—I will host a youth group, formally called The Table, on Sunday evenings from 6-8, meeting in the youth room/basement. If you would like to volunteer to provide light snacks/refreshments during our meetings, please get ahold of me.

I look forward to teaching your kids & hearing your voices!

Prayers & Blessings,

Steph Gamble

KID'S & YOUTH CORNER

If any elementary through high school student who would like to attend church camp this summer, please see Steph Gamble or Teri Lavengood.



Welcome to The Table!

The Table brings together boys and girls in grades 7-12 to gather in Christ-centered community, grow deep roots in God's truth, and build lasting relationships with one another.

Here at The Table, we will anchor one another in Christ, growing and reaching beyond.

"Everyone belongs. Everyone grows."

We will begin in February; meeting together on Sunday evenings from 6-8 p.m. Invite your friends and bring your Bibles and notebooks if you wish. We will meet in the Education wing, in the youth room.

"So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others."

--Romans 12:5

Calendar of events:

February 1—First meeting, here we will go over the month's plans, do an ice breaker to get to know one another, and read/discuss scripture, answer any questions about the group

February 8—NO MEETING

February 15—Lesson 1 Prayer & Worship: Redirected

February 22—Lesson 2 Prayer & Worship: Relationship

March 1—Lesson 3 Prayer & Worship: Reflection

March 8—Lesson 4 Prayer & Worship: Rhythms

