



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

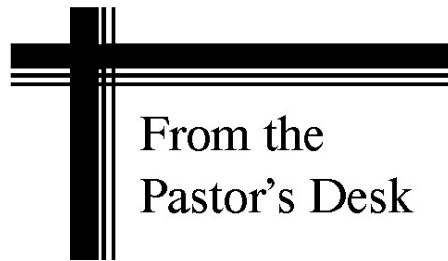
God's work. Our hands.

The Salem *LIFE*

Newsletter of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church
Sandwich, Illinois

December 7, 2025

VOL. 52, NO. 12



From the Pastor's Desk

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we enter the Advent season, it is good to take a moment to slow down and remember what we are waiting for. It is too easy to get caught up in the frenzied busyness of the season and to forget the wonder of the moment as God breaks in among us. We remember the wonder of the babe born in Bethlehem, when God came to live as one of us, and we look forward to the

day when Jesus will come again, to be with us forevermore. Since God's hand touched the world at Bethlehem, the world has never been the same. The following poem reminds us of God's presence in our frenzied lives.

Toward the Light

Too often our answer to the darkness is not running toward Bethlehem, but running away.

We ought to know by now that we can't see where we are going in the dark.

Running away is rampant... separation is stylish: separation from mates, from friends, from self.

Run and tranquilize, don't talk about it, avoid.

Run away and join the army of those who have already run away.

When are we going to learn that Christmas Peace comes only when we turn and face the darkness?

Only then will we be able to see *the Light of the World*.

(From *Kneeling in Bethlehem* by Ann Weems)

Our generation has mastered the skill of running very well, but we so often forget where we are running to. We often hope that if we run fast enough, we will leave behind all of our problems, all of our broken promises and hopes. And so we run, fearing our darkness, but never facing it, never finding the strength to mend our broken world.

Yet God comes quietly in the midst of our dark and broken world. As a baby in a manger, Jesus may not seem like an answer to our endless race from our fears. But God in Jesus knows what it is to be human, to face all of the fears, temptations, and struggles that we face. In Jesus, there is a light breaking through the darkness, a hope that there can be a finish to our endless running. With Jesus we can face the darkness in our lives and our world. Only he can show us the way to Bethlehem, the way to lighten our darkness.

The baby born in Bethlehem so long ago brought the promise of light to a world lost in darkness. We live in that promised light even today. It helps to guide and comfort us as we make our way on our long pilgrim journey through this world. But in the midst of the darkness that surrounds us, we have the promise of a light that will one day fill every dark corner of our world. Jesus will come again, and as the light of the world he will make our darkness light forevermore. He will come to reign and to judge, and to bring all who believe to be with him.

So as we run on our way toward Bethlehem, we are racing not just toward a dim memory of a baby in a manger. We run toward a future where Christ is coming soon, and where all our darkness will be made light. *Come quickly, Lord Jesus!*

Yours in Christ,

Pastor John

Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church

Serving Christ!

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Bookkeeper
Traditional Worship Coordinator
Director of Contemporary Worship
Organist/Pianist
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Gloria Gilbertson
Connie Hanson
Nancy Hayes

Staff Office Hours: Tues.—Thurs., 9 am—2 pm; Fri, 9 am-12 noon

Happening this week...

Sunday, December 7 ADVENT 2

9:00 am Worship/Kids Church

10:00 am Coffee Fellowship

Monday, December 8

9:00-12:00 noon Quilting

Tuesday, December 9

9:00-12:00 noon Quilting

6:00 pm Advent Midweek Worship Service

Wednesday, December 10

10:00 am Methuselah Coffee Group

11:30 am Lunch Bunch at Star 34

6:30 pm Confirmation at St.Johns

Thursday, December 11

8:30 -10:30 am Our Sharing

Pantry Distribution

5:00 pm Praise Team

No Handchimes

7:00 pm Salem Choir

7:00 pm AA

Friday, December 12

7:30 pm AA

Sunday, December 14 ADVENT 3

9:00 am Worship/Kids Church

10:00 am Coffee Fellowship

10:30 am Christmas Program

In Our Church Family.....

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:

- ⇒ Paul Kulbartz*
- ⇒ Paula Mueller
- ⇒ Buck Scents*
- ⇒ Nicholas Kulbartz (*son of Paul Kulbartz*)
- ⇒ Stan Benson*



***Indicates Salem member**



LaVerne Mattson passed away peacefully at his family farm on Wednesday, November 26. Salem was near and dear to his heart. Keep his children and grandchildren in your prayers, especially Shawna (Seth) Hoffman and Kurt (Kelsey) Mattson. May God comfort all who mourn.

Visitation is Friday, December 5 from 4-7 pm at Salem with funeral services following the next day at 10:00 am led by Pastor John Rothfusz.

Donald Rosentreter passed away on Tuesday, November 18 in Chatham, IL. A former Salem member, he is the brother of Holly (Mike) Ballas, Cara (Maury) Killey and Arline (Richard) Anderson. Pastor John Rothfusz led a funeral service at Beverage Family Funeral Home on November 24, 2025.



Styrofoam Recycling Day is on December 14

Stewardship Thank You

Thank you to all who participated in our Stewardship Commitment Sunday by offering your Intent Cards to the Lord! When you make a plan and carry it out, you can have a substantial impact to support our shared ministry. We can each use the gifts that God gives us, and together we at Salem Lutheran make a real impact into the world.

What ministry of Salem Lutheran are you most proud of? We love to gather together as a community to worship and share fellowship. We dearly want to see our young people learn the faith and claim it, so we support our Sunday School and Confirmation Programs. We actively care for our neighbors with our feeding programs: Our Sharing Pantry, the Blessing Box, and our regular group serving at the Northern Illinois Food Bank. We care for our beloved members with the Member Support Committee, and reach out to our neighbors with the Outreach Committee. We give thanks for those who take good care of our beautiful church and grounds. And we love to eat together and have fun, with gatherings hosted by our Fellowship team.

Salem Lutheran is your church, and we depend on you to do all of these things. Thank you for your generous gifts week by week, and for special gifts that you give at holidays or the end of the year. Together we make Salem a truly special church for everyone.

Summary of Intent

So far, 43 intent cards have been received for a total of \$234,516. Money designated to the General Fund is \$176,980 and \$57,536 to the capital fund.



December 2, 2025 Salem Congregation Council Meeting Highlights

The Congregation Council met at Salem on Tuesday, December 2, 2025, starting at 6:40 p.m. after the Advent Midweek service. Council members Ron Cunz, Alan Deaton, Walter Farley, Donna Fraley, Bonnie Guyer, Connie Hanson, Durk Hellinga, Sharon Wallis and

Pastor John Rothfusz were present. Newly elected member Bryan Wernli was also present. Jacqueline Beverage was absent.

The council voted to accept the minutes of the November 4 Congregation Council meeting, as prepared by Alan Deaton.

The Financial reports for October were examined. These are the following balances as of the meeting.

General Fund: \$ 9941.89 Designated Fund: \$ 38,355.13 Capital Fund: \$ 41,280.79

The sweep has been paid off after some generous special gifts by Salem members in response to an appeal.

Council members heard monthly reports from Pastor John Rothfusz and from council members representing Salem's committees. They reviewed the calendar to highlight events coming up and to look for conflicts.

Pastor John asked for a resolution designating some of his 2026 salary as housing, and some for reimbursable expenses like mileage or meals. This is a standard annual designation that helps with his taxes, but does not cost Salem anything more. The resolution passed.

The new shed is nearly completed, but installation may be delayed because of snow.

The Stewardship Committee has been pleased by the generous response from members on our Stewardship Commitment Sunday. So far, 42 intent cards have been received, and 21 commitments are for an increased amount. 7 intent cards are new. We still hope to receive more intent cards before we have final numbers, but this helps us shape our projected budget for 2026.

The Salem Outdoor Sign Team offered a proposed sign design, after a great deal of work and deliberation. The Council passed a motion to commit to that sign plan and to the vendor who designed it. The proposed sign will be presented to the congregation at the January Congregational Meeting, with an appeal to raise funds to pay for it.

The Salem Tech team asked for a motion to spend money in the tech fund to begin work laying data cables from the balcony to the front for future screens, and to place electrical outlets where they may be needed. The motion passed.

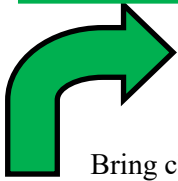
Council members will be installed January 4. Officer elections will be held at the January meeting. Current officers are eligible for another year.

The group heard comments from each member. The meeting was closed with the Lord's Prayer.



Salem's Fellowship Committee is planning Christmas Caroling to our homebound members and delivery of the Christmas cookies prepared by the Member Support Committee. All are welcome to go caroling on Sunday, Dec. 14 starting at 2:00 pm. The group will return to the church about 4:00 pm for a chili supper. All are welcome, but please sign-up in the narthex.

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR:
 SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Romans 15:4-13; Matthew 3:1-12
 SUNDAY, DECEMBER 14: Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 1:46b-55; James 5:7-10; Matthew 11:2-11



December 14, 2025

Styrofoam Recycling Day

Bring clean Styrofoam to Alan's Green Machine.


Thank you to Nancy Hayes for the fall décor and the many elves who ready our sanctuary for Advent and Christmas.



DECEMBER

"DIAMOND PLUS" BIRTHDAYS

12/01 Marilyn Wouda
 12/15 Connie Hanson
 12/24 Michele Farley


Happy Birthday

ENV # _____

YOUR NAME(S) _____

_____ HOW MANY PLANTS? _____

I would like my plant(s) listed as follows: (i.e., in memory of, in honor of, etc.)

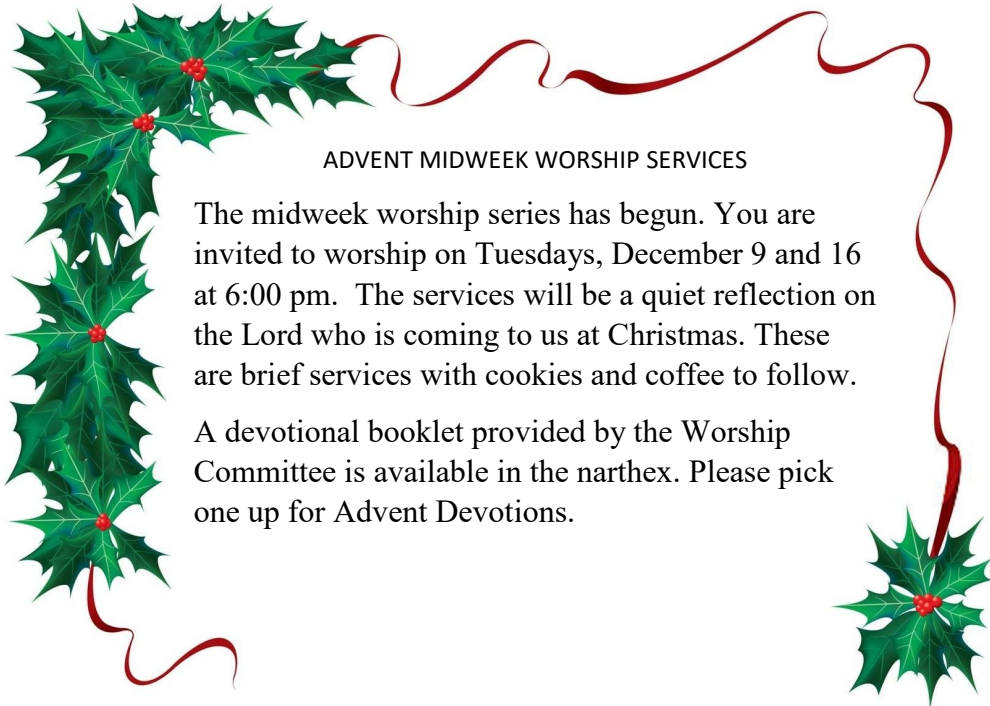
<p>Will you pick up your plant(s) after December 24th? ___ YES ___ NO</p>	<p>Please enclose \$14.00 per plant. Amount enclosed \$ _____</p>
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Please return your order form to Salem in person or by mail to PO Box 105, Sandwich IL 60548.





Please join us for the
**SUNDAY SCHOOL
CHRISTMAS PROGRAM**
DECEMBER 14TH, 10:30 AM
"Christmas Around the World"
written by Sharon Wallis



ADVENT MIDWEEK WORSHIP SERVICES

The midweek worship series has begun. You are invited to worship on Tuesdays, December 9 and 16 at 6:00 pm. The services will be a quiet reflection on the Lord who is coming to us at Christmas. These are brief services with cookies and coffee to follow.

A devotional booklet provided by the Worship Committee is available in the narthex. Please pick one up for Advent Devotions.



Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 21, 2024 9:00 AM
Service of Holy Communion



Christmas Eve
December 24, 2024 5:00 PM
Candlelight Carol Service of
Holy Communion

First Communion Celebration

Six youth met with Pastor John to learn about communion. They each made a banner with Mickey Farley which helped to mark the occasion. Welcome to the Lord's Table!

Adelaide Brain

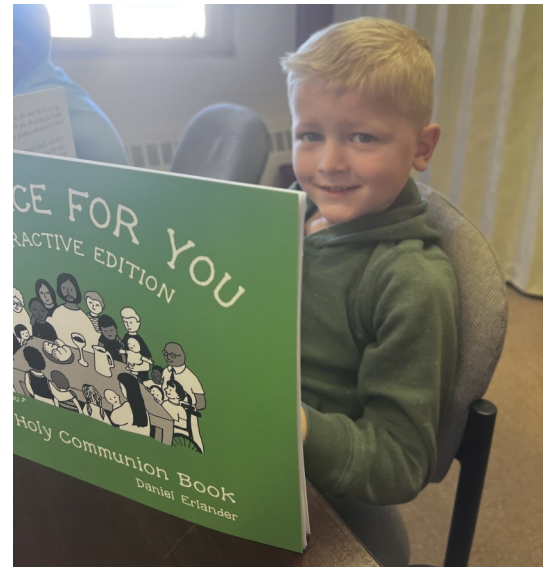
Easton Habbe

Kinley Klingberg

Truitt Mattson

Tess Michels

Elena Wernli



It was the sixth or seventh potato day this year for Northern Illinois Food Bank volunteers from Salem. Volunteers packed 10,835 pounds of potatoes in November. This amount provided 9,029 meals. Those who have already signed up will be packing food on December 16. January 20th is the first day in 2026 to pack for NIFB.

Veterans were honored on November 9 by the Sunday School youth and congregation. Veterans pictured below are Paul Kulbartz, Ron Cunz, Marty Mueller, Jim Bernhardt, and Dean Burau.



Mark your 2026 Calendar

- ◆ Installation of Council members on January 4 during Sunday morning worship
- ◆ Quilting Days: January 12 & 13 9-12:00 noon
- ◆ Budget Review: January 18 at 10:15 am
- ◆ Trivia Night: January 24 at 4:00-6:00 pm
- ◆ Styrofoam Recycling: January 25
- ◆ Annual Meeting: January 25 at 10:00 am followed by pot luck

Salem Ruth Unit

These ladies met in November to enjoy fellowship and a study of stewardship. In December, the meeting date is December 17 at 11:30 am at Star 34 for a luncheon.



LUNCH BUNCH

Wednesday, December 10 11:30

Star 34, Sandwich

Please sign up for reservations.

Thank you to all the bakers and shoppers in 2025 who supplied treats after worship for all to enjoy with coffee and visiting.

The sign up sheet is ready for 2026 - grab your favorite dates while you still can! It's your choice whether to serve your treats upstairs or in the Fellowship Hall.



Methuselah meets at 10:00 am on Wednesday mornings.

You are all welcome to come, drink coffee, have a donut, and solve the current problems of the world (although a “no politics or religion” rule is strictly adhered to unless Pastor John is there to answer a religious question correctly). Join us!

Salem Lutheran Church

P.O. Box 105

Sandwich, IL 60548

O Holy Child of Bethlehem descend to us, we pray

