



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

The Salem Life

Newsletter of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church
Sandwich, Illinois

March 8, 2026

VOL. 53, NO. 3



Dear Friends in Christ,

In this Lenten season, the focus of our Wednesday Lenten Services is on the promises we make in Baptism. The first of those promises is “... *live among God’s faithful people.*”

God calls us to live out our faith in community. The church is here because it is so essential that we gather together to share in this journey of faith. We hear God’s Word together and share in the Lord’s supper, and that draws us together in common purpose as the one body of Christ.

There is no such thing as a solitary Christian. We are baptized into the community of faith, and we live out our faith in regular gatherings with other Christians. Sunday morning worship is the essential time when we share in faith, drawing together with brothers and sisters of all ages to be God’s people together.

I am celebrating the many ways that I have seen us living together among God’s faithful people in this Lenten season. Salem hosted a fellowship feast recently, just a simple meal where we could sit down together and enjoy community. Yet many people worked together to make it happen. Marilyn Wouda organized us, many members came together to serve, and partners from other churches brought side dishes and desserts to share. We had a great turnout from the community, enjoying the ways that God calls us together.

The ministerial association is also hosting Community Lenten Breakfasts. We gather on Wednesday mornings at 9 at the Federated Church, and share in coffee, sweets, and a message given by one of the local pastors. These have also been very successful as we gather together to build community, worship, and pray. Last week there were 83 people at the gathering, and nearly every table was full. It is great to gather people from all of our community churches, and to build relationships as we celebrate what we share in Jesus.

We are also planning ahead for another Community Good Friday service at Salem Lutheran, centered around a choir cantata and the passion reading from John. Salem members and members of other churches are invited to join with the Salem Choir to sing as a community choir for that service. We are excited to see how many singers will come, and how many will come to worship on that holy night as we see Jesus go to the cross to die for us.

Here at Salem, we enjoy gathering for Lenten Soup suppers and Lenten Worship on Wednesday nights. These are an opportunity to engage more deeply with our Salem family, as we journey together with Jesus on the way to the cross. We want to deepen our faith and consider how we can better follow the Lord in this season and always.

What an abundance of times and ways that we can live out that calling to “... *live among God’s faithful people.*” What joy we find as we build deep and lifelong relationships that build trust and love within our Salem Lutheran Church family.

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Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church

Serving Christ!

1022 North Main Street - PO Box 105 - Sandwich, IL 60548

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Web site: www.wearesalemlutheran.org

Staff

Pastor	Administrative Assistant	Kelly Clason	office@wearesalemlutheran.org
Pastor John Rothfus	Financial Secretary, Etc.	Gina Carlson	financial@wearesalemlutheran.org
Phone: (779) 901-0803	Bookkeeper	Karen Wesson	bookkeeper@wearesalemlutheran.org
pastorjohnrothfus@gmail.com	Traditional Worship Coordinator	Nancy Rex	nancy@wearesalemlutheran.org
	Director of Contemporary Worship	Libby Welsch	libby@wearesalemlutheran.org
	Organist/Pianist	Gloria Gilbertson	
	Organist/Pianist	Connie Hanson	
	Maintenance	Nancy Hayes	

Staff Office Hours: Tuesdays - Thursdays, 9 AM-2 PM; Fridays 9 AM-12 noon

Happening this week...

Sunday, March 8 **Daylight Savings Time**

9:00 am Worship/Kids Church

10:00 am Coffee Fellowship

10:15 am Sunday School

10:15 am Fellowship Committee

Monday, March 9

9am—noon Quilting

Tuesday, March 10

9am—noon Quilting

5:30 pm Outreach Committee

6:30 pm Finance Committee

Wednesday, March 11

9:00 am Lenten Breakfast@Federated Church

6:00 pm Soup Supper

7:00 pm Lenten Worship

Thursday, March 12

8:30 -10:30 am Our Sharing Pantry Distribution

5:00 pm Praise Team

6:00 pm Handchimes

7:00 pm Salem Choir

7:00 pm AA

Friday, March 13

7:30 pm AA

Sunday, March 15

9:00 am Worship/Kids Church

10:00 am Coffee Fellowship

10:15 am Adult Bible Study/Sunday School

In Our Church Family.....

PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:



- ⇒ Pat Whitten*
- ⇒ Bonnie Longwell (*neighbors of Ruth & Dale White*)
- ⇒ William Lein (*grandson of Gloria & Brett Gilbertson*)
- ⇒ Brett Hammer (*friend of the Erik Carlson family*)
- ⇒ Fred Staffeldt (*father of Fran Parkison*)
- ⇒ Paula Mueller
- ⇒ Nicholas Kulbartz (*son of Paul Kulbartz*)
- ⇒ Stan Benson*

*Indicates Salem member

MARCH "DIAMOND PLUS" BIRTHDAY



- 3/6 Doug Fraley
- 3/7 Terry Holstein
- 3/13 Dale White
- 3/16 Irene Yingling
- 3/23 Darwin Classon
- 3/27 Paula Mueller
- 3/30 Laura Caupert
- 3/31 Dean Burau

Scripture Readings for:

Sunday, March 8: Exodus 17:1-7; Psalm 95;
Romans 5:1-11; John 4:5-42

Sunday, March 15: 1 Samuel 16:1-13; Psalm 23;
Ephesians 5:8-14; John 9:1-41

Last Sunday, we had a little disruption, worrying about some members who were not there. They had gone to pick up another member, and found that she was not well. They stayed there, found a family member to check on her, and made sure that she would be OK. I felt so thankful that they cast aside their plans to be in worship on time, and stayed with her until things were resolved. They showed God's love to a sister in faith, in the way that Jesus calls us to.

What a gift that God gives us to one another in the church. We are blessed to share together in regular worship, and to get to know and love one another as we live in community. We build relationships of trust and care, and those relationships make our lives rich and full. God knows what we need most when he calls us to live together with God's faithful people in love.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor John

SUNDAY, MARCH 8



March 3, 2026 Salem Congregation Council Meeting Highlights

The Congregation Council met at Salem on Tuesday, March 3, 2026, starting at 6:30 p.m. Council members Jacqueline Beverage, Ron Cunz, Walter Farley, Bonnie Guyer, Connie Hanson, Durk Hellinga, Sharon Wallis, and Pastor John Rothfusz were present. Alan Deaton and Bryan Wernli were absent.

The council voted to accept the minutes of the January 6 Congregation Council meeting, as prepared by Bonnie Guyer.

The financial reports for January were examined. These are the current balances as of the meeting.

General Fund:	\$ 12,678.05	Designated Fund:	\$ 38,219.17
Capital Fund:	\$ 62,178.13		

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.

The council received an updated Salem Constitution. The last changes were made at last year's annual meeting.

The property committee approved a bid for \$3265 to replace the suspended ceiling and lights that fell in the entry way off the kitchen and fellowship hall.

The council received a gift of \$10,000 given in memory of Laverne Mattson for the sign fund. There will be a small plaque with Laverne's name on the sign, in appreciation for his lifelong commitment to Salem Lutheran.

The council agreed to support the summer youth mission trip to Louisville with money from the Servant Events Fund. Brandon B. and Pastor John will take part from Salem.

The council reviewed and passed a revised key policy. As before, the purpose is to give church keys to those actively leading ministry groups and caring for property, and collecting keys from those who are no longer serving in those ways.

The group heard council comments from each member.

The meeting was closed at 7:11 p.m. with the Lord's Prayer.

Lutheran Identity/Salem New Member Class

UPCOMING EVENTS

Are you interested in becoming a member of Salem Lutheran? Or are you a member, but would like to know more about the faith that we share? If there is an interest, Pastor John will lead a class to go over some basics about our Lutheran faith and who we are as God's church. Please let Pastor John know if you are interested in taking part.

New Sign – Making it Happen!

We are nearly there! It takes gifts of all sizes to make a project come to life. Thank you for your generosity!

As you recall, when we meet our \$10,000 goal, we can start demolition and installation as weather allows this spring. It looks promising that with the next few gifts, we will get to our goal.

Keep up the good work!



QR codes

You may notice some new QR codes appearing in your bulletin, on the worship slides, and around the church. Bryan Wernli created these to help us do important things.



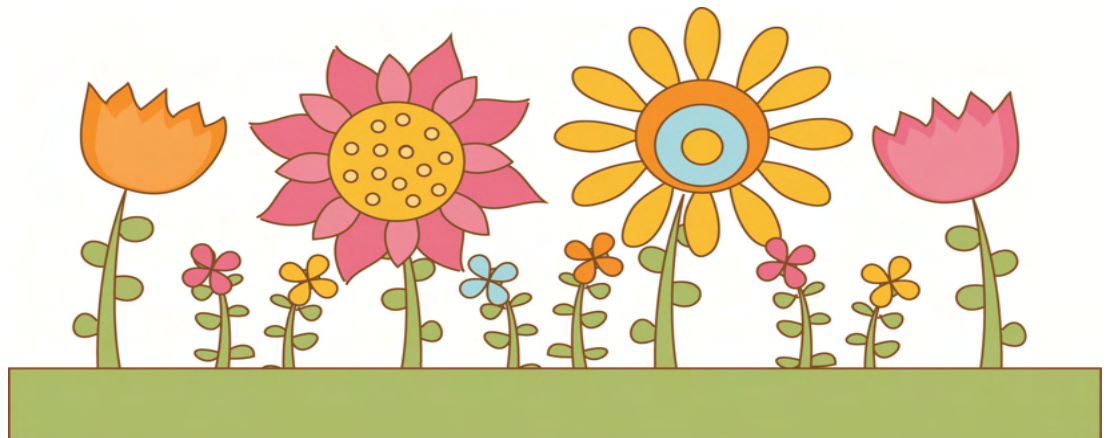
The QR codes in the bulletin link to our giving page on the church website. Some people prefer to give electronically, with a bank transfer or a debit/credit card. They may not carry cash or a checkbook to give in ways that others prefer. So we will include that QR code in our bulletins and on the screen to make it easy to give online.

We also made QR codes for people who would like to connect to the WiFi at church. You can scan it and be online quickly. We hope it is another way that we can be welcoming and hospitable at Salem Lutheran. If you have any questions about these QR codes, please talk to Bryan or to Pastor John.

Spring is Coming – Yard Projects

With Springtime around the corner, we need to plan for our garden, flower beds, and church yard. Would you like to help with an area around the church, or with the flower garden across the road? We have a beautiful and eye-catching spot to share with our community, and it takes many hands to make it happen.

There's a sign up board in the Coffee Fellowship area. Please talk to Pastor John, Bonnie, or the property team if you have any questions or to discuss how you would like to help.



Salem Keys

The Salem council approved the following key policy. It is slightly revised from one previously approved when the building was rekeyed with the new addition. We want to limit the number of keys that are issued, and keep track of who has them.

If anyone has a key given when they were a council member or ministry leader, and you are no longer serving in that way, we ask you to return that key to the office.



Salem Key Policy

All staff members will receive master keys. All council members will receive outside keys, if they request one. Outside users will receive outside keys. The funeral dinner coordinator will receive an outside key. All others must schedule access for after business hours. All others needing permanent issue keys must be approved by the council.

The office will keep a record of keys issued with name and date. Each year, the office staff should review the need for each person to have a key. If their role continues, they continue to hold it in trust. If they no longer have that defined role, they should be asked to return their key to the office.

Adopted 3/3/2026

Email Scammers Are Out There

As much as we value the trust that we find in one another, there are those who try to take advantage of that trust. In recent weeks there have been a number of emails sent in the name of Pastor John, but not by him. They used an email that was not his, but listed his name. These went to a number of church members and to people connected to Salem. They were asking people to respond to help me with something, then asking people to get gift cards “for a cancer patient.”

This is a common phishing email, pretending to be someone else to scam people out of money. Pastor John will never send you an email asking for money like that. If something seems strange, please do reach out to the pastor or the office to see if it makes sense. Too many times good and generous people quickly act to “help,” and then realize that they were taken advantage of. We value your warm and generous hearts, and would hate to see that used against you.

Adopt-a-Plant

The Fellowship Committee will be hosting an Adopt-a-Plant Day where you can come to Salem and choose a plant or 2, or 3, or more. You may bring plants from your yard or indoor plants you want to trim back. Start planning now and there will be more details when we get closer to May.



Thank you to all who helped with the Community Fellowship Feast at Salem in February. A special thanks to Marilyn Wouda who coordinates with neighboring churches and the Salem volunteers to host the dinner.



Salem Worship during Lent

You are invited to 6:00 pm Soup Suppers served by these committee members followed by 7:00 pm Lenten Services on:

March 11 - Finance/Property

March 18 - Christian Ed/Outreach

March 25 - Ruth Unit/Member Support



Lenten Breakfast Series

You're invited to the Lenten Breakfast Services every Wednesday in Lent from 9:00-10:00 am at the Federated Church on Main Street. Breakfast items and coffee/water are available before a brief devotion on Jonah presented by the Sandwich/Somonauk Ministerial Association.

Salem Hosts on 3/25/2026 We take our turn as hosts on Wednesday, March 25 at the Lenten Breakfast Series. Please sign up to bring baked goods and fruit. Help is needed to prepare platters and clean up afterwards.

ELCA Good Gifts Global Barnyard Sunday School Lenten Project



Salem Sunday School will be collecting donations for ELCA Good Gifts Global Barnyard throughout the Lenten season.

You are invited to join them in their effort. Watch for little piggy banks that you can pick up to help save your spare change to alleviate world hunger.

Please complete this form and return to Salem to reserve Easter lily plants to help decorate the sanctuary for Easter worship services. Order deadline is Sunday, March 29, 2026.

NAME _____ How Many? _____

How shall we list in the bulletin?

Given by _____

Given in memory of _____

Given in honor of _____

I will pick up my plant(s) after Easter: YES _____ NO _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____

Please enclose payment of \$12.00 per plant with your order.





Northern IL Food Bank volunteers made a trip to Geneva in February and packed almost 9,000 beautiful green apples to feed our hungry neighbors!

Those who have signed up already will pack again on March 17, 2026. The next few dates are April 21 and May 19. Please sign up in the narthex.



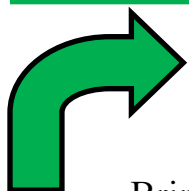
Lunch Bunch

Lunch Bunch met at Somonauk Pancake House in February to enjoy food and fellowship. We will take a break in March, and the location for April 8th is to be determined.



Salem is starting another season of cleaning up ditches along West Sandwich Road. Meet Mickey Farley in the parking lot of Prairie View Elementary School (1201 Castle St). Mickey has the vests and garbage bags for the job. It is suggested that you wear boots or sturdy shoes and gloves. Dates for your calendar are:

April 18 June 20
August 22 October 24



Sunday, March 15

Styrofoam Recycling Day

Bring clean Styrofoam to Alan's Green Machine.

YouthWorks

Youth Mission Trip

St. John Lutheran in Mendota is planning a summer youth mission trip to Louisville, Kentucky in late June, led by YouthWorks. Pastor Elise will be taking part. They offered to let High School youth from Salem Lutheran share with them in this trip. Salem has a long and meaningful history of sending young people on service trips, and we are excited for this chance. Last year Pastor John went on this trip with two youth and this year, Brandon Beverage will go with him on this year's trip. It is also good to find ways to share in ministry with St. John Lutheran in Mendota.

DRUM CIRCLE

Alan Deaton will lead a drum circle lesson on Sunday, March 15 during the Education Hour. All ages are welcome! See you at 10:15!

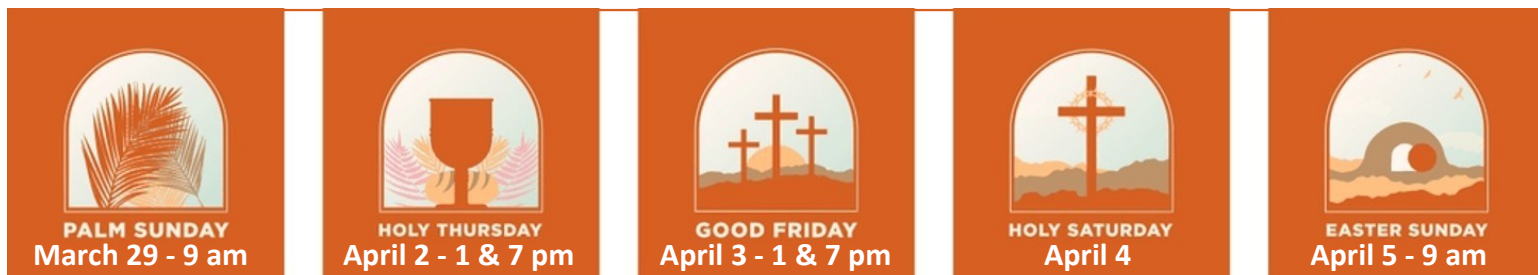
The drummers will play the following Sunday, March 22 during worship.



Salem Lutheran Church

P.O. Box 105

Sandwich, IL 60548



EASTER BRUNCH
April 5, 2026

Sign up to help make a delicious brunch buffet of breakfast and lunch items and enjoy fellowship and celebrate Easter together.