



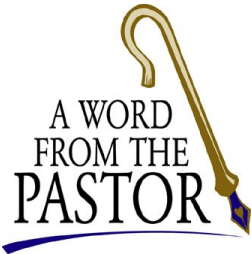
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
God's work. Our hands.

# The Salem Life

Newsletter of Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Sandwich, Illinois

April 9, 2026

VOL. 53, NO. 4



Dear Friends in Christ,

What is the church here for? A pastor from another church group asserted that we are in the business of “Sin Management.” She said that our job is to get people to stop sinning, to change their ways and just be good people. Lots of people think that way, and say that the business of the church and Christians is to teach us to shape up and be good, moral people. In this thinking, moral people are good Christians, and immoral sinners are bad, destined for God’s judgement.

The more I thought about that answer, the more it bugged me. Of course, we want people to turn away from sin and to follow in God’s way. But the idea of “Sin Management” puts it all on our shoulders. It says, “Just stop it, already. Shape up, and stop sinning.”

Yet in our confession every week we confess that we are captive to sin and cannot free ourselves. This isn’t a failure of character or willpower, but simply an acknowledgement that we are not in control. Our lives and our relationships, even our very best and proudest acts are warped and marred by our sin. The terrible three – the Devil, the World, and our sinful self, have got a hold of us, and we can’t get away. We may want to be good, but by ourselves we just can’t do it.

This is the season when the church celebrates our greatest hope. Jesus is risen from the dead, bringing forgiveness of sins, life and salvation to all who believe in him.

We know from Romans 6:23 that “the wages of sin is death.” Death is the only end for people who are caught in sin. So God in Jesus comes to our world, and he dies our death for us. He takes our sin to the cross, and bears the cost of it, dying the death that we deserve. And then on Easter morning, Jesus rises up from the dead, and declares God’s great victory over sin and death.

Jesus has defeated all that binds us – even the Devil, the World, and our sinful self. He gives forgiveness of sins, life and salvation to all who believe in him. It is a free gift, not because we deserve it, but because God is gracious. God chooses to love the unlovely, to rescue the hopeless, to save the lost. That is just who God is.

And we respond in hope and joy to the Lord Jesus who raises us to new life in him. We let go of the idea that we can be perfectly good and moral in all things, and strive to live lives of daily repentance. Repentance means turning away from our ways of sin and brokenness, knowing that God forgives us for Jesus’ sake every time that we fall. So our life is a daily journey, turning away from our sin, and turning to Jesus and his way. We constantly fail and fall back, and Jesus constantly forgives us and turns us again to his way of life.

The Church is where we gather to celebrate what God is doing among us. We hear God’s Word of life and share in the sacraments, where we receive the promise of forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. In the church we find a community of forgiven sinners, just like us, who are striving to repent and change our lives by following Jesus. We often fail, but we always have new hope and encouragement that God is with us, even in this struggle.

*Continued on page 3*

# Salem Evangelical Lutheran Church

*Serving Christ!*

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## Staff

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	Director of Contemporary Worship	Libby Welsch	<a href="mailto:libby@wearesalemlutheran.org">libby@wearesalemlutheran.org</a>
	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, May 10

- 9:00 am Worship/Kids Church
- 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship
- 10:15 am Adult Bible Study/Sunday School
- 10:15 am Fellowship Committee

Monday, May 11

9 am - noon Quilting

Tuesday, May 12

- 9 am - noon Quilting
- 5:30 pm Outreach Committee
- 6:30 pm Finance Committee

Wednesday, May 13

- 10:00 am Methuselah Coffee Group
- 11:30 am Lunch Bunch
- 6:30 pm Confirmation at St. Johns

Thursday, May 14

- 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, May 15

7:30 pm AA

Sunday, May 17

- 9:00 am Worship/Kids Church
- 10:00 am Coffee Fellowship
- 10:15 am Adult Bible Study/Sunday School
- 11:00 am End of Year Picnic

## *In Our Church Family.....*

### **PLEASE REMEMBER IN PRAYER:**

- ⇒ The family and friends of Ace Hanson\*
- ⇒ Shawn Brennan (*friend of Marlene Kee*)
- ⇒ Jeff Urban (*brother of Michele Farley*)
- ⇒ Paula Mueller
- ⇒ Nicholas Kulbartz (*son of Paul Kulbartz*)
- ⇒ Stan Benson\*

\*Indicates Salem member

### **JUNE "DIAMOND PLUS" BIRTHDAYS**



- 6/8 Paul Kulbartz
- 6/11 Darlene Bastian
- 6/19 Pat Whitten
- 6/23 Nancy Rex
- 6/27 Cindy Webster
- 6/30 Pat Clason

### **Scripture Readings for:**

Sunday, May 10: Acts 17:22-31; Psalm 66:8-20;  
1 Peter 3:13-22; John 14:15-21

Sunday, May 17: Acts 1:6-14; Psalm 68:1-10, 32-35;  
1 Peter 4:12-14; 5:6-11; John 17:1-11

The God who raised Jesus from the dead is here to raise us up from all that keeps us in sin and death. He is ready to destroy the power of that sin in us, and make us alive and new in him forever. No wonder that every Sunday in the church is a "Little Easter," a time to celebrate our Lord Jesus who dies and rises, so that we might find new life in him for another day, another week, and for all eternity.

Yours in Christ,

Pastor John Rothfusz



### **May 5, 2026 Salem Congregation Council Meeting Highlights**

The Congregation Council met at Salem on Tuesday, May 5, 2026, starting at 6:30 p.m. Council members, Ron Cunz, Alan Deaton, Walter Farley, Bonnie Guyer, Connie Hanson, Durk Hellinga, Sharon Wallis, and Pastor John Rothfusz were present. Jacqueline Beverage and Bryan Wernli were absent.

The council voted to accept the minutes of the April 7 Congregation Council meeting, as prepared by Alan Deaton.

The treasurer's reports for March were examined. These are the current balances as of the meeting.

General Fund: \$ 11,645.62

Capital Fund: \$ 60,861.51 – with \$ 40,194.74 allocated for sign and painting projects

Designated Fund: \$ 31,500.78

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.

We got a lot of projects done on the spring work days. The new sign with the church name on the east wall of the church turned out very well. The old shed was removed, and the new one needs a lower trailer to transport it.

The finance team has resumed making an extra mortgage payment, since the capital fund will support that.

The new sign on the corner should be constructed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> weeks of June.

The council adopted revised language for a Giving Opportunity Policy. This is to help us track and spread out the times when we ask for special offerings.

The group heard council comments from each member. The meeting was closed at 7:26 p.m. with the Lord's Prayer.



Member Support gathered to fill May Baskets for the homebound. Pictured above (L-R): Pam Pescitelli, Patty Farley, Jan Dunn, Kelly Clason and Donna Fraley.



Creative people joined Libby to do a Mother's Day Glass Painting project. Pictured above (L-R): Marilyn Wouda, Jan Dunn, Fran Parkison, Michael, and Donna Fraley.

# Congratulations!

## PRE-SCHOOL

Hallie Hayes, daughter of Tom & Kayla Hayes  
Chase Klingberg, son of Kelly & Cody Klingberg  
Oakley VanPelt, daughter of Jake & Allyssa VanPelt

## HIGH SCHOOL

Jeffrey Ashley, son of Nikki & Steve Ashley, from Sandwich High School  
Mikayla Brain, daughter of Hazel Brain, from Sandwich High School  
Adam Kee, son of Matt & Paula Kee, from Plano High School  
Hunter Kee, son of Matt & Paula Kee, from Plano High School  
AJ Parkison, son of Fran Parkison and Alan Parkison, from Sandwich High School  
Owen Vanhaag, son of Aimee Haag and Matt Vanhaag from Iowa Park High School in Texas  
Pacey Wyant, daughter of Carolyn and Dan Wyant, from Somonauk High School

## COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY

Morgan Kee, daughter of Kyle and Michelle Kee, from Missouri State University

**May God bless each of them as they move on to the next chapters in their lives.**

## **CELEBRATE ALL FATHERS WITH A DELICIOUS BRUNCH**

Sunday, June 21, 10:00 am

Invite your dad for a simple Sunday menu of  
Biscuits & Sausage Gravy, Frozen Fruit Cup, Coffee & Juice.



Let's celebrate fatherhood on this Father's Day!  
Hosted by Salem's Christian Education Committee for  
those who are a father, have a father, or had a father.

## Synod Assembly – Ways we can give to share in ministry

The Synod Assembly will be held June 12-13 at Augustana College. Durk Hellinga, Marilyn Wouda, and Nancy Rex will be our voting members, along with Pastor John.

The Synod Assembly offering will go to support our two Synod Authorized Worshipping Communities. These are not traditional churches, but assemblies that gather in new ways to build community.

The 2026 Synod Assembly In-Kind offering will be something different. Congregations and individuals are invited to bring \$25 gift cards for LSSI staff caregivers to use to help those that they serve. They can quickly meet a need with foster children, or many other families in need that they serve. Gift cards from the following places would be helpful and welcome:

**Retail/Grocery:** Walmart, Target, Amazon, Walgreens, CVS, Dollar General, Dollar Tree, Aldi, Hy-Vee, Jewel-Osco

**Gas Stations:** Casey's General Store, Shell, Mobil, BP

**Restaurants:** McDonald's, Subway, Burger King, Wendy's, Culver's

Another alternative way to give is with the Mindful Giving program. Mindful Giving allows you or your congregation to purchase items from a dedicated Wishlist curated by LSSI staff, and the items will be shipped directly to LSSI. These items support many important LSSI programs, and the Wishlist is updated regularly based on current, urgent needs. You can look at [giftlist.lssi.org](http://giftlist.lssi.org) to shop the Wishlist. **Please be sure to add your congregation's name at checkout** so we can track and celebrate your church's generosity!

### SHARING A NOTE

Dear Salem Friends,

Thank you for all your prayers, cards, and calls! They were very much appreciated. I am doing very well now and pretty much back to normal. I'm looking forward to my grandson's graduation at the end of May.

Sincerely,

Pat Whitten



## Meet the Author and Illustrator

It has always been Gina Carlson's dream to write a book ever since she was a little girl. Her uncle encouraged her to follow that dream because, 'if you don't do it now, you'll regret it!'. Gina's poem about her own pets and pets of family and dear friends became a children's book, You Belong With Us. Gina paired up with Libby Welsch, who illustrated the book.

They will have a Book Signing during Coffee Fellowship on Sunday, June 7. Books will be on display and available for purchase.

Gina Carlson is the Financial Secretary and Libby Welsch is the Director of Contemporary Worship at Salem Lutheran Church.



## God's Work. Our Hands.

Northern IL Food Bank volunteers made a trip to Geneva in April to pack food for our hungry neighbors. They packed 161 bags of potatoes which represented 5,805

pounds of potatoes and 4,838 meals. They also packed 704 bags of oranges which represented 3,520 pounds of oranges and 2,933 meals.

Those who have signed up already will pack again on May 19, 2026.



### LUNCH BUNCH MEETS May 13 at 11:30 am

This month we will meet at The Office in Wedron. Address is 2005 N 35th Road, Ottawa. It's about 25-30 minutes south west of Salem.

### **Planning for your Final Stewardship with your Will or Life Insurance**

God calls us to be good stewards through all of our lives. Just as God gives us our lives, our relationships, and all that we possess, we are privileged to give back to the Lord a share of what God gives us in trust. All through life we seek to be good stewards of God's gifts, giving back a percentage of what God first gives us as our offering in faith.

When we die, we know very well that we can't take it with us. All that we leave behind will be directed somewhere, by some plan. If you were to die without a will, the State of Illinois would be happy to make those decisions for you, but I doubt you would like the outcome. So every Christian, whether affluent or not, should have a will, a plan for their final stewardship of what God gives them. As our kids have gotten older, Elise and I redid our wills, which had gotten out of date.

In the same way, we may also have life insurance policies, directed to pay out to a beneficiary. During our working years, our family usually depends on us for financial support, and life insurance protects that. Later on, when they are more independent, we can reconsider how we would want to direct the funds from life insurance.

Have you made a will or looked at it in recent years? Does it truly reflect what is most important to you? It is appropriate for our wills and life insurance to reflect what we value most in life, including our faith. I hope that you will consider including a gift to Salem Lutheran Church in your will, as your final stewardship of all God's blessings in your life. This can demonstrate the faith by which you live all your life, and give a witness to those left behind. It can be your gift to help protect the future of the church that you love.

What is an appropriate gift to the Lord? I would recommend a percentage gift of your estate, such as a tithe (10%). Another way that people have thought about it is to treat the church equally as another child would be treated in your estate. This makes sense especially when children are grown and well-established, and don't really need a significant inheritance.

If you wish to consider a gift to Salem Lutheran, you may direct it without a designation, to the Capital Campaign, or to the Salem Lutheran Church Mission Endowment Fund. If you have any questions, you are always welcome to talk to Pastor John or to the Endowment Committee. The ELCA also has a helpful gift planning professional who can help if you wish. Your intentional gift planning can make a significant difference to the health and vitality of Salem Lutheran for the future. Thank you for your witness of good stewardship of all that God gives you!

# Thank you! Tack! Muchas Gracias!

## Thank you Fellowship Committee!

What a joy to bring home new plants to plant indoors/outdoors and thinning out plants to be transplanted to another yard.

Libby had a few artists who came to play with paints on glass. It was truly a busy day!

## Thank you Property Committee and friends!

Thank you! So many projects were completed last weekend! Salem is looking good! We are ready to welcome friends and neighbors to worship with us and learn the love of Jesus.

Thank you for washing windows, filling holes, grading the yard for better drainage, moving the old shed, bringing in the bricks for the new sign, hanging the sign seen from the parking lot and many others.



Salem Lutheran Church

P.O. Box 105

Sandwich, IL 60548



## UPCOMING EVENTS

Save the Date! : VBS will be July 20-23  
with St Johns. More details to follow.

### **Sunday School Picnic & Third Week of the Month Diaper Closet Giving**

Salem's Sunday School will celebrate with an end-of-the-school year picnic on Sunday, May 17 beginning at 11:00 am. They invite the congregation to join them for a hot dog picnic. If you and your family would like to join us, please sign-up in the narthex to help us plan. There is also opportunity to sign up to help supply food.

Watch for details of monthly Sunday School activities for the summer.

### **Diaper Closet & Our Sharing Pantry**

Remember that Salem continues to donate diapers or wipes to the Diaper Closet at Sandwich Church of the Nazarene. Although accepted any time, a volunteer delivers them after the third Sunday of every month. This ministry is so helpful to new moms and dads.

Donations of money or food towards Our Sharing Pantry is always welcome as help for feeding our hungry neighbors.

