



Salem Connection

January 2026

Salem Lutheran Church 21276 Archibald Road PO Box 100 Deerwood MN 56444
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I've noticed that whatever sermon I'm writing tends to influence these "from the Pastor" notes. Having just returned from vacation, I'm working to address all the concerns that came up while I was away, preparing for the council goal -setting mid-January, and I have yet to put any creative thought into how Salem can honor the season of Lent that begins mid-February.

It's also the start of a new year with what the culture promises if we work hard enough, we can also be "a new me." I have high expectations of myself, urgent changes to better care for my body and soul, character flaws that I have left unchecked for too long.

I wonder if you might face the same pressure. Some of our octo-and nona-genarians have honestly confessed they still struggle with the same things, wondering if they will ever be free from their own flaws, wondering if sin will ever loosen its hold. We feel behind like we're failing to grow or mature, feel like we're missing something essential to being human, feel like changing ourselves and our ways is impossible. "New year, new me" is an awfully empty aim.

So faith feeds us something different. Early every January we hear "new year, new name." The Baptism of Jesus is read every year where Jesus comes out of the water and before he has done anything, he hears the voice of the Father: "You are my beloved Son, in you I am well pleased."

We are baptized with the same words, the same promise, the same Fatherly love. In the face of our flaws and failures, the face of our mounting to-do lists, the expectations for all things to be "new" and different and our willpower to finally prevail, we hear that we are loved – just as we are. Before you check a box, before you achieve some kind of zen, before your ducks are all quacking in a row, you are loved.

Maybe if we take the pressure off, we can be free to see the many things we get right. We can see ourselves the way God sees us. We can rest in the fact that we're forgiven, and then allow that love to change us. We can allow God's Spirit to make us new, into the image of the Son instead of some better version of ourselves. Just as you are, right now, you are loved by God.

I will not apologize if you hear this same message from me on Sunday – it bears repeating. And if you have one goal this year, let it be that you rest in the love your heavenly Father has for you.

Happy New Year!
~Pastor Amanda



Worship Notes at Salem

Thank you to those serving in January:

READERS

4 Katie McCormick

11 Ken Stebbins

18 _____

25 _____

USHERS

4 Mark & Cindy Larson, Curt & Sylvia Hoge

11 Randy Holmvig, Herb & Barb Schoon, Mark Boike

18 Clark & Joyce Marshall, Roger & Marlene Prill

25 Nory & Peggy Hunze, Chuck Lubowitz & Karla Peterson

COMMUNION SERVERS

11 Curt & Sylvia Hoge, _____

18 _____, _____, _____

25 _____, _____, _____

OFFERING COUNTERS

Jeff Mitchell & Tom Wiedell — thank you both!

Undecorating from Christmas!

We are looking for a group of individuals to help take down the Christmas decorations around the church!

There is not a date set for this yet, but if you have a time in mind that a few people can get together and do it, contact the office!



Everybody Matters – Worship

Why should we go to church on Sunday?

There is the analogy from the hymn, Fill My Cup Lord, that our souls are a cup that needs to be filled. Worship and the Word are what is needed to fill our empty cups so that we may pour out blessings, wisdom, patience, understanding, compassion, and service throughout the week. We are Jesus hands and feet in our homes and community.

January Worship Schedule

4 9:00a.m. Praise Worship
Pop-Up Choir

11 9:00a.m. Traditional Worship
Songs of the Season

18 9:00a.m. Children's Service
Handbells

25 9:00a.m. Traditional Worship
Choir

Winter Music Schedule:

Every Wednesday:

Bells practice at 5:30p.m.

Choir at 6:15p.m.

Praise Team at 7:00p.m.

Choir will sing in worship the second and fourth Sundays of each month.

Bells will ring in worship the third Sunday.

The Pop-Up Choir, also known as the volunteer choir, sings the first Sunday.

Heartwood Ministries

The monthly Bible study will take place on Monday, Jan. 12th at 1:00p.m.

Heartwood Delivery

If you are looking for a way to serve and bring fellowship to members who are unable to join us Sunday mornings in person, we have a need for members to distribute bulletins to those who live at Heartwood.

This is a way for those who are physically unable to join us to still feel connected to the congregation and the church. If this is something you are interested in doing, we are looking for 2-3 individuals to volunteer

ONE week/Friday a month! If you would like more information regarding this serving position, please reach out to the church office and Grace will answer any questions you may have!

Message from the Spiritual Gifts Team

Faith Formation!

Sunday School Schedule

Each Sunday at 9:50a.m. for about 30 minutes
Open to children age 3-12

Registration forms are at the usher stand—and
let us know if you'd like a prayer buddy!

Confirmation

Wednesday Evenings at 6:00p.m.
Wednesday, January 14th—Mentor Night!



Adult Faith Formation

Women's Bible Study, Wednesdays at 3:00p.m.

Men's Bible Study, Fridays at 8:00a.m.

Both of these take place every week!

If you are looking to join a Bible Study, there is always room for one more at the table!

Kids Club

This is a request for people to share their hobbies for our Kids Club, which meets the Second Wednesday of each month from 3:15-5:00p.m.

This after school program, that occurs once a month, is a time for members of our congregation to share what they love to do with the youth in our community! Sharing what you love with the younger generation is such an important building block in their lives! If you are interested in sharing a hobby in the next few months, we encourage you to reach out to the office so we can get the schedule set up!

January Kids Club

Click Here to Register www.salemdwd.org

Examples of activities done in the past!



September 11: Welcome & Outdoor Games

October 9: Search & Rescue Dogs



November 13: Lego Brick Bible Video

December 11: Make & Take Christmas Craft
Christmas Party: All Ages Welcome!



January 8: Making Friends, Color with Kindness

February 12: Quilting, Spreading Warmth & Care



BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH

	13	Mark Boike
3	Carla Barker	Kathy Dauer
	Noah Coughlin	Greg Reed
4	Rick Blomberg	John Zender
	Nathan Perpich	Kay Cooper
7	Macyn McBroom	Carole Houghton
8	Laura Martin	19 Cindy Sykes
9	Tom Reek	20 Mark Larson
10	Mariah Bodle	23 Chuck Lubowitz
11	Peggy Hunze	24 Ed Godfrey
		27 Katie McCormick



Financial Updates

Salem Lutheran Church			
Profit & Loss			
November 2025			
	100 Church	150 Building	TOTAL
Income			
4000 · Offerings	32,600.09	0.00	32,600.09
4100 · Building Fund	0.00	13,197.56	13,197.56
4900 · Other Income	1,230.15	114.39	1,344.54
Total Income	33,830.24	13,311.95	47,142.19
Expense	26,860.20	8,628.00	35,488.20
Net Income	6,970.04	4,683.95	11,653.99

November Benevolence

ELCA Benevolence: \$2,011.11

YAGM Support: \$124.95

Voyageurs LM Support: \$124.95

Thanksgiving (Lutheran World Relief): \$280

Total Nov. Benevolences: \$2,541.01

**Information Provided by Aimee Watson,
Financial Manager at
Salem Lutheran Church**

Thank you for the continuous generosity!

Salem Lutheran Church			
Profit & Loss			
Year-to-Date through November 30, 2025			
	100 Church	150 Building	TOTAL
Income			
4000 · Offerings	297,878.14	0.00	297,878.14
4100 · Building Fund	0.00	87,808.11	87,808.11
4900 · Other Income	28,941.18	7,832.11	36,773.29
Total Income	326,819.32	95,640.22	422,459.54
Expense	335,063.03	103,006.73	438,069.76
Net Income	(8,243.71)	(7,366.51)	(15,610.22)

Salem Outreach Governing Board – November 11th 2025

Present were: Jason Kempthorne, Linda Sudman and Nancy Tighe, Kay Bendorf, Dianne Boike

Guest: Jake Walker

Absent : Carol Malek (New Board Member) and New Council Rep

MSC: Motion was made, seconded motion carried to start meeting.

Opened with a prayer by Pastor Amanda

Secretary report was emailed to board members. Linda Sudman motioned to approve the secretary's report. Kay Bendorf seconded the approval. MSC

The Financial report was approved MSC. Motion of approval was made by Dianne Boike and seconded by Nancy Tighe. MSC

As a new year begins, 2026 Jason Kempthorne went over and reviewed the responsibilities of the board members.

*Salem Lutheran Church Covenant of Conduct

*Salem West – Gods Hands at Work, Salem Outreach Volunteer Handbook

*Salem Lutheran Church Outreach Governing Board – the Purpose of the Outreach Board

*Director of Outreach Position Description

*Annual Self Evaluation form

Election on new positions for board members.

Motion was made by Jason Kempthorne to reelect Linda Sudman as Secretary for 2026. Kay Bendorf seconded the motion. MSC

Motion was made by Jason Kempthorne to elect Kay Bendorf as Treasurer. Dianne Boike seconded the motion. MSC

The OGB will elect a new president at the next board meeting since not all board members were present at this time.

Mustard Seed: Mustard Seed Sales for October 2025 were \$59,477.

Salem West Impact Report for the month of October: 51 referrals and 47 completed orders. A total of 92 individuals were helped. Total volunteer hours for October were 1118.

There has been \$377,145 in goods delivered to the community YTD.

The in kind impact is \$796,427.34 YTD.

Continued on the next page.

Mustard Seed Report: Jake

Taste of Christmas is here. All hands on deck! Set up for Mustard Seed store will be held Monday, Nov 17 and Tuesday, Nov 18 starting at 8:00 am. Pizza lunch will be provided on Monday. Pallets will be placed in aisles and the totes will be unloaded in the proper aisles. All items will be unloaded onto the designated shelves. Christmas trees will be set up on Tuesday in the aisles and decorated. Store will open on Wednesday, Nov 19 – Saturday, Nov 22, 9:00am to 5:00pm. No decorating will be needed on Monday, Nov 24. Store will also be open Monday, Nov 24-Wednesday, Nov 26. Mustard Seed will be closed on Thursday Nov 27 Thanksgiving Day but back open on Friday, Nov 28 and Saturday, Nov 29.

Melva's last day in the clothing department will be on Monday, Nov 24. She has a new job.

The new LED sign is installed and looks great. Many compliments on the new sign.

New Business:

Outreach Report: An email went out on Oct 24, 2025 for a vote on the budget ratifications. All board members were in favor of the new proposed budget.

Goal Settings for 2026:

*Recruit volunteers

* A once a month communication to the congregation on how the Mustard Seed is doing and what impact it served to the community for that month. Example, OGB bought 8 dressers and 5 cribs to service families in need for the month of Oct. Thanks for your help and donations.

*Explore a 501-c3 that is separate from the church for the Mustard Seed.

*Patch up the roof in the furniture barn.

*New single name for Mustard Seed/Salem West by 2026.

Old Business:

One Name – Exploring the Mustard Seed getting its own 501-c3 and then focus on one name for Salem West/Mustard Seed. This will be tabled until January 2026.

Jail Ministry will be on Dec 3rd. Need some volunteers to help with this.

Next OGB Meeting will be Dec 16th, 2025

Closing Prayer by Pastor Amanda

Motion to Adjourn by Linda Sudman and seconded by Kay Bendorf. MSC

Salem Lutheran Church Council Meeting Minutes

November 25, 2025

We exist with God's help, to provide Leadership for Salem Lutheran Church.

MSC=The motion was seconded and carried.

Call to Order

Members Present: Pastor Amanda Kempthorne, Mark Boike, Lynn Hansen, Don Hales, Nate Van Risseghem via Zoom, Sylvia Hoge, Tina Royer via Zoom, Julie Fritz via Zoom, Alan Niemann, Randy Holmvig

Opening Prayer: Pastor Amanda

Approval of the Agenda:

Additions to Agenda: Old business: Trunks for Treats, Honduras Mission Trip. New business: December meeting, Capital Appeal donation, Employment manual revision, 2026 Grad Party, Deerwood Days

Motion to approve the November 25 agenda with additions. MSC

Introduction - Code of Conduct

Pastor Amanda pointed out the required reading for council members: 2025-2026 Council meeting dates, Council member position descriptions, Organizational Chart, Conflict of Interest, Covenant of Conduct,

Members signed the conflict-of-interest form

Executive Committee Roles and Officer Elections

- President: Don Hales
- Vice President: Alan Niemann
- Treasurer: Mark Boike

Secretary: Julie Fritz

Motion to accept slate of officers. MSC

By nature of this responsibility, the above persons are hereby authorized as signers on all Salem Lutheran Church accounts.

Approval of minutes:

Motion to approve October 23, 2025, meeting minutes. MSC

Financial Report: Mark Boike

Financial Manager Aimee asked how to disperse the 2026 money to Outreach. It was decided to transfer it monthly.

Motion to approve the October 2025 financial report. MSC

Pastor's Report – Pastor Amanda

- Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas worship preparation
- Confirmation lesson plans – finalized mentors!
- Technology team meeting: recycling electronics, new desktop for finance, bulb in fellowship hall projector

(continued)

- Christmas program – video compilation telling the story, wrote the “script”
- 2026 Calendar items, big-picture preparations
- Ministerial partnerships – Cascade Thanksgiving and Care Center Rotation
- Congregation class in Jan-Feb?
- Synod Bishop election survey/information out to congregation
- Vacation December 28 through January 5 = 2 Sundays
 - Dec 28 – Lessons and Carols with suggestions from congregation
 - Jan 4 – Members to lead – Epiphany text of magi with 3 gifts
- Epiphany season (Jan 11 thru Feb 15) – Setting 3 sung liturgy in ELW
- Salem hosting the conference gathering Sun, Feb 15 afternoon (bishop election information, candidates nominated)
- Lent begins Feb 18 – pursue a rotation with Lutheran pastors in the area?

Committee Reports and Assignments:

Capital Appeal -Randy

Columbarium -Don

Facilities- Nate

Faith Formation –Sylvia

Memorial – Mark

Outreach – Julie

Pastor Amanda reported for Outreach. Kay Bendorf is treasurer, Linda Sudman is secretary. They still need a President. There were 46 volunteers on Monday November 17 for Taste of Christmas set up. Goals: to increase volunteers, to communicate more with congregation, to work on combining back and front volunteers to understand each other's work, to slowly work on 3-name problem.

Spiritual Gifts – Julie

Technology – Mark

Welcome – Tina

Worship and Music –Tina

Unfinished Business:

- Annual Meeting Review- It was deer opening. Need to move so it doesn't conflict- Next year will be November 1 and it won't conflict with deer hunting. We present the budget for 2 weeks before the annual meeting, but everyone goes to first week and not the second.
- Annual Report – Remind committees to write their annual report. Due Jan 10.
- Parents Night Off- No one volunteered to organize in December so we will cancel.
- Trunks for Treats – thanks to Deerwood Bank handing out dollar bills, we know there were \$320 children present this year
- Don and Lynn will be attending a synod meeting where Synod ministry in Honduras will be discussed. They will share what our Honduras teams have done. For this year, there are 8 people confirmed that are going to Honduras. Don would like the council to reverse their previous decision to skip a year and not have a Honduras or local mission trip because of the finances of the church. There was no motion made. The Honduras group will be going on their own.

(continued)

New Business:

- December meeting Dec 16 6:30pm, Exec Dec 9 3pm
- Retreat: Sunday Jan 18, 10:15am – 3:00pm
- Staff – We would like to do Christmas cards and gifts. Council members said they would donate money for gifts. Pastor will provide cost to council.
- Financial manager will put the end-of-year donations reminders in the December Connection.

There has been an offer of a donation to Capital Appeal funds via members of the Capital Appeal Team. Someone has vacant lots on a lake and wants to sell these to Salem. In turn, the neighbor of the lots is an interested buyer, but original owner has offered them a sale price of \$7,500. Salem would have to pay the closing costs (\$1,600). This gives the donor the tax credit. The receipt of the property is pending a clear title search.

Motion to accept the gift for Capital Appeal and spend \$1,600 from Capital Appeal for closing costs. The Pastor, President and Treasurer will be signers. MSC

- Exec committee will be working on revisions to the Employment Policy.

2026 grad party from Crosby has asked for money donations.

Motion to use \$100 for the grad party from the Youth Group restricted account: line item 2310. MSC

Deerwood Days-The Deerwood Days would like to use some of our parking lot for vendors.

Motion to let Deerwood Days put vendors in our parking lot if ok by our insurance. MSC.

SOS Submission: No submission.

Announcements:

Will not be collecting toys for Lions this year, plan for 2026

Executive Team Meeting: Dec 9, 3pm Next Council Meeting: Dec 16, 6:30pm

A motion was made to adjourn at 8:21pm

Closed in Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Fritz



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
28 9:00am Worship	29	30 9:00am Piecemakers	31	1 Office Closed	2 8:00am Men's Bible Study	3
4 9:00am Worship 9:50am Sunday School	5	6 9:00am Piecemakers 5:00pm Worship and Music Meeting 6:00pm Faith Formation	7 3:00pm Women's Bible Study 5:30pm Salem Ringers 6:00pm Confirmation 6:15pm Choir Practice 7:00pm Praise Team Practice	8	9 8:00am Men's Bible Study	10 9:00am Serpent Lake Association Meeting 12:00pm Drum Group Practice
11 9:00am Worship 9:50am Sunday School	12 1:00pm Bible Study at Heartwood	13 9:00am Piecemakers 3:00pm Executive Team Meeting	14 3:00pm Women's Bible Study 3:15pm Kids Club 5:30pm Salem Ringers 6:00pm Confirmation 6:15pm Choir Practice 7:00pm Praise Team Practice	15 6:00pm Cuyuna Range Lions Meeting	16 8:00am Men's Bible Study	17 1:15pm Funeral Service for Teddy Skattum
18 9:00am Worship 9:50am Sunday School 10:15a.m.-3:00p.m. Council Retreat	19	20 9:00am Piecemakers 1:00pm Outreach Governing Board Meeting	21 3:00pm Women's Bible Study 5:30pm Salem Ringers 6:00pm Confirmation 6:15pm Choir Practice 7:00pm Praise Team Practice	22 6:30pm Council Meeting	23 8:00am Men's Bible Study	24
25 9:00am Worship 9:50am Sunday School	26	27 9:00am Piecemakers	28 3:00pm Women's Bible Study 5:30pm Salem Ringers 6:00pm Confirmation 6:15pm Choir Practice 7:00pm Praise Team Practice	29	30 8:00am Men's Bible Study	31