



Salem Connection

February 2026

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Epiphany is about to go out with a bang: one big, shining moment when Jesus is revealed for who he is (pun intended – you’ll see on February 15). Then, mid-month, the church moves into the season of Lent. It moves us from the excitement of Jesus-is-God to the varied ways people receive Jesus: tempting by the adversary, Nicodemus with questions, a woman at the well who wonders, a blind man who eventually sees, and two sisters with faith in the face of death. (These are found in Matthew 4 and John chapters 3, 4, 9,

and 11.)

Lent is my favorite season. It’s all about the basics of our faith: trust in the Father, confession of our sin, hope in Christ, and transformation by the Spirit. There isn’t any fluff with Lent, just the raw truth that we need God’s mercy. But we’re not good with “need.” We don’t like reflecting on what’s missing within us or how we’re not sure what we’re supposed to be doing. We definitely don’t enjoy receiving help from others and we certainly don’t want to be told what to do or think or change.

Some of the needs we have are easy to name. Others are harder to admit, or even to notice, until something feels off. If we pause and listen more closely – to our bodies, our hearts, our lives – other needs begin to surface. Sleep. Human connection. Meaning. Rest. Prayer. Beauty. Change. Healing.

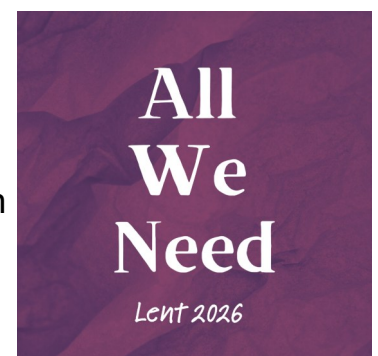
Lent invites us to slow down and pay attention – to what we need and the way God meets us in our need. Sunday morning, we hear the people’s longings in the stories listed above; Wednesday evenings, we hear the longings of our own.

BUT!

This season isn’t about navel-gazing! Because if we experience these needs, you can be sure our neighbors experience them too. What do we need as a congregation? What about our neighbors beyond the church doors? The needs of our community might not match our assumptions, and discovering them requires listening, relationship, and humility. Once we name these needs, we can live out our baptismal calling and respond with compassion and connection.

I hope to see you at 6:30 these Wednesday evenings of Lent as we share in these conversations and reflect on how our needs are met with God’s care for us; the kind of care that truly sustains us and our neighbors.

Peace,
~Pastor Amanda



Worship Notes at Salem

Thank you to those serving in February:

READERS

- 1** Nory Hunze
8 Ken Stebbins
15 _____
22 _____

USHERS

- 1** Mark & Cindy Larson, Curt & Sylvia Hoge
8 Randy Holmwig, Herb & Barb Schoon, Mark Boike
15 Clark & Joyce Marshall, Roger & Marlene Prill
22 Nory & Peggy Hunze, Chuck Lubowitz & Karla Peterson

COMMUNION SERVERS

- 1** Julie Fritz, Axel Novak, _____
8 Julie Fritz, Tom Wiedell, _____
15 _____, _____, _____
22 Gary & Carol Malek, _____

OFFERING COUNTERS

Jeff Mitchell & Tom Wiedell — thank you both!

February Worship Schedule

- 1** 9:00a.m. Praise Worship
Pop-Up Choir
8 9:00a.m. Traditional Worship
Choir
15 9:00a.m. Praise Service
Handbells
22 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, Feb. 9th at 1:00p.m.

Salem is hosting "Fat Tuesday on a Sunday" as we indulge in delectable donuts with various glazes after worship on February 15! Special thanks to Sherri Godfrey for her "Bountiful Blessings" baking!!

Fat Tuesday is when households of faith use up their stores of meats, fats, and sugars to prepare their homes and hearts. The next day, the church universal begins the 40-day season of Lent, marked by fasting and prayer. We gather on Ash Wednesday evening and receive ashes on our heads (or hands) as a sign of our repentance and mortality, humbly looking to God for mercy.



We hope you will join us for these two unique celebrations and they would guide you deeper in faith!

Everybody Matters - A Cheerful Giver

2 Corinthians 9:7 Each one should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Romans 12:8 If it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

Thank you to all who contribute weekly or monthly to operating budget of this congregation and to those who make special gifts when needs arise. Thank you to those who eagerly say yes when asked to help or serve. Thank you to all who generously volunteer their time, energy, and skills to serve our church and community. Thank you to those who pray daily for the needs of others.

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



Confirmation

During the season of Lent (February 18-March 25), Confirmation students attend Wednesday worship for free worship note credit and meet with mentors after worship each Wednesday for discussion.

Thank you mentors for guiding our students in their faith in this season!

Kids Club

This after school program occurs the second Wednesday of the month from 3:30-5:00p.m. and 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 MARCH, please let Pastor Amanda know. We typically have 3-6 students on regular weeks.

APRIL Kids Club will be another craft and experience event about the Easter story, sharing the good news of God's great love with kids. We hope for 15 children. If you'd like to lead a craft, please contact Raye Cragun!

February Kids Club

Click Here or Register on our website: www.salemdwd.org

Adult Faith Formation

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

"Fruit of the Spirit" is next!

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!

2026 Men's Retreat

Salem Lutheran Church

Annual Men's Fishing Retreat (age 18 and older)

Monday, July 6th to Thursday, July 9th, 2026

Kec's Kove, Lake Kabetogama

Cost: \$325.00

Registration is NOW OPEN online & available at the church!

[Click Here to Register Online at salemdwd.org](http://www.salemdwd.org)

2026 Women's Retreat

Salem Lutheran Church

Annual Women's Retreat on Bay Lake Island

September 25th - 27th

Registration and more information will be available soon! We encourage those interested in going to be sure and watch emails and announcements in the spring and summer!



Special Celebrations in February



BIRTHDAYS THIS MONTH

	16	Cindy Larson
	19	Kyle Bartels
3	22	Hunter Brix
		Claire Pelant
5	25	Mark Houghton
8	26	Doris Carlson
		Wayne Kohlen
10	28	Jayne VanRisseghem
12		Nancy Meyer
14		Norris Hunze
		Jan Rude



1	Richard & Susan Johnson
11	Kyle & Devan Bartels
22	Joel & Mary Huntley
	John & Becki Zender
26	Jon & Shirley Ross
28	Mike & Jami Bodle

Financial Updates

Salem Lutheran Church

Profit & Loss

Month of December 2025

	100 Church	150 Building	TOTAL
Income			
4000 · Offerings	39,137.14	0.00	39,137.14
4100 · Building Fund		16,718.31	16,718.31
4900 · Other Income	1,250.92	120.06	1,370.98
Total Income	40,388.06	16,838.37	57,226.43
Expense	31,693.03	8,628.00	40,321.03
Net Income	8,695.03	8,210.37	16,905.40

December Benevolence

ELCA Benevolence: \$2,363.95
 YAGM Support: \$144.12
 Voyageurs LM Support: \$144.12
 Christmas (Lutheran World Relief): \$912.90
 Total Nov. Benevolences: \$3,565.09

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

Thank you for the continuous generosity!

Salem Lutheran Church

Profit & Loss

Year-End Total

	100 Church	150 Building	TOTAL
Income			
4000 · Offerings	337,015.28	0.00	337,015.28
4100 · Building Fund	0.00	104,526.42	104,526.42
4900 · Other Income	30,192.10	7,952.17	38,144.27
Total Income	367,207.38	112,478.59	479,685.97
Expense	366,756.06	111,634.73	478,390.79
Net Income	451.32	843.86	1,295.18

February Connection Article from the Church Council

I hope as you are reading this you are sitting by the fireplace with your feet up and keeping warm on this cold day! It's hard to believe that we just finished the first quarter of this year's council!

Some financial news, thanks to your giving we ended 2025 in the black! The other great news is that as we started 2026 we have the first balance budget that I can remember! Again thank you for wonderful generosity!

On Sunday January 18th we had our annual Council retreat where we reviewed what we have accomplished in 2025 and then set new goals and actions for 2026. The following are some of goals, actions and items to remember:

Start working on a new five year plan for Salem.

Lenten Services begin Ash Wednesday February 18th.

The Council would like to thank the Faith Mentors for working with the Confirmation Students!

Kids Club is looking for volunteers to help in, come and share your skills.

The Church Council exists with Gods help, to provide leadership for Salem Lutheran Church. We are a team and we are a family and we would love to hear from you on any suggestions or observations that you have. Maybe it's something you would like to see us do, or maybe it's something you don't want us doing. In any event we want to hear from you. We have what's call a SOS (Suggestion-Observations-Solutions) form. They are located by the doors in the Narthex and are confidential, so if you have anything that you want us to consider please fill it out and we will get back to you within a month.

Gods Peace to you!

Sincerely,

Don Hales

Council President

Weather Cancellation Policy

Adopted by Council February 23, 2023



WEATHER CANCELLATION POLICY For Salem Lutheran Church and Salem Outreach

1. First and foremost: If the weather is bad enough to question whether or not Worship is canceled, please err on the side of safety and stay at home.
2. The Pastor or Council President will determine church closures. The Director of Outreach or Council President will determine outreach closures.
3. In the case of inclement weather on a weekend, the decision about worship cancellation will be made by 7:00 a.m. Sunday morning.
- 4 The Pastor will make changes to the church phone message, website, and social media (Facebook and Instagram).
5. People in the congregation are encouraged to call the church for a voicemail message or check online church communications (listed in 3) for weather related announcements.
6. Each group (Quilters, Bible Study Group, Committee, etc) is responsible for informing the group of cancellations due to the weather.

Salem Outreach Governing Board – December 16th 2025

Present were: Pastor Amanda Kempthorne, Jason Kempthorne, Linda Sudman and Nancy Tighe, Kay Bendorf, Carol Malek and Julie Fritz

Guest: Jake Walker

Absent: Diane Boike

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

Opened with a prayer by Pastor Amanda

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

The Financial report was approved. Motion of approval was made by Linda Sudman and seconded by Jason Kempthorne. MSC

Mustard Seed Report: Jake Walker

Things went very well with the Christmas sales. Moving all Christmas up front. All Christmas items will be 90% off once we return Jan 3rd. After Jan 10th whatever Christmas items are left will be gone through and either saved for next year or tossed.

The Mustard Seed will be closed from December 22 to January 3rd. During this time the Carpets will be shampooed and the floors will be washed and waxed.

Toby was fired by Jason Kempthorne. Gretchen gave her notice. Gretchen and her son are moving to Florida. Tom is a new delivery volunteer. Paige is new employee. She will be taking over Melva's position in clothing. Paige is working part time for now.

We will be hiring 2 positions in January 2026 for a Cashier and Clothing department.

Mustard Seed: Mustard Seed Sales for November 2025 were \$66,097.

Salem West Impact Report for the month of November: 38 referrals and 28 completed orders. A total of 82 individuals were helped. Total volunteer hours for November were 1368.

There has been \$404,765 in goods delivered to the community YTD.

The in kind impact is \$870,149.74 YTD.

New Business:

Election on new positions for board members.

Motion was made by Jason Kempthorne to elect Linda Sudman as President for 2026. Nancy Tighe seconded the motion. MSC

Motion was made by Jason Kempthorne to elect Kay Bendorf as Treasurer for 2026. Nancy Tighe seconded the motion. MSC

Continued on the next page.

Motion was made by Jason Kempthorne to elect Julie Fritz as secretary for 2026. Linda Sudman Seconded the motion. MSC

Monthly announcement: Kay Bendorf will make an announcement at church on Jan11th on the impact the mustard Seed is making on the community. She will include how we packed food here at church and how we now distribute the packages of food to each of the clients we serve.

On January 25th Jason Kempthorne will be making an announcement at church to recruit volunteers for the Mustard Seed.

The Mustard Seed received 14 beds that were donated by Slumberland.

A motion was made by Kay Bendorf and seconded by Linda Sudman to release funds from 200.2710 World Hunger Distribution of \$652.00.

A motion was made by Jason Kempthorne and seconded by Carol Malek to release funds from 200.2730 Soup Kitchen \$31.00. Get a gift Card to Sue for donating desserts to the soup kitchen.

A motion was made Kay Bendorf and second by Nancy Tighe to release funds from 200.2750 Food Shelf Distribution of \$345.

7801- General Program Expense fund, \$3,515.38. This was used to buy Gaylord boxes, oversized boxes and 300 red totes with lids to help organization and store items for taste of Christmas.

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.

Next OGB Meeting will be January 20th, 2026

Closing Prayer by Pastor Amanda

Motion to Adjourn by Linda Sudman and seconded by Carol Malek MSC

Salem Lutheran Church Council

December 16, 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, Sylvia Hoge, Julie Fritz, Randy Holmvig, Alan Niemann

Members Absent: Tina Royer

Opening Prayer: Pastor Amanda

Approval of the Agenda:

Addition to Unfinished Business: How we work with Committees

Motion to approve the December 16 agenda, MSC

Approval of minutes:

Motion to approve November 25, 2025, meeting minutes. MSC

Approval of Financials:

Motion to approve November 2025 financial report. MSC

Pastor's Report – Pastor Amanda:

Participated in community member funeral at Koop

Wonderful Make-and-Take event 12/10 with 14 community children

Planning for Dec 28 Lessons and Carols, and January 4 Epiphany (Gift) Sunday. Need volunteers to lead the worship.

Decided against an all-congregation class – no direction/interest at the time

Faith Formation is deciding whether to continue kids club in the spring. There are only 3 kids in the club and are wondering if it is worth the time of the volunteers to continue.

Committee Reports

Faith Formation- Sylvia- Have not met

Outreach- Julie

two staff gone. Will hire cashier and clothing person after the 1st of the year
purchased 300 red bins with flip tops. These replace bins that have been broken or don't have covers.

Disbursed money to ELCA World Hunger and Cuyuna Range Food Shelf

Most of the store is stocked with new items since Christmas items are depleted

Worship and Music- Pastor Amanda

January 11 will start Setting 3 in the worship book. It is familiar to most people and will be in the newsletter for people to listen to.

Songs of the Season concerts were successful

(continued)

Facilities- Randy

Will do annual audit in January. Looking at fire extinguishers, lights, etc. to see that everything is working correctly.

Light above cross flickers. May need scaffolding to get to the light.

Custodian is doing well in his role

Narthex, sanctuary and pews have been cleaned.

Unfinished Business:

How we work with Committees:

Reviewed the protocol: When a committee has a recommendation to give to Council, Council reviews and makes a decision. Council then needs to report decision back to the committee with rationale for decision.

Donation of land follow-up.

The church can receive land, but with no strings. Council decided to accept the offer if there was a clear title. Donor changed mind and wanted to quitclaim deed the land. This is not possible for the church; therefore, Council did not accept the offer. We will not receive the donation at this time. The synod has an attorney, and we have a local attorney we can use if this comes up again.

Council Retreat January 18 10:15am- 3:00pm.

Lunch- sign-up sheet distributed.

Staff Christmas:

Council signed cards. Council will give gift cards to staff.

New Business:

Unemployment insurance:

Since we are a nonprofit organization, we do not provide unemployment. This is a policy by the State of Minnesota; however we have not had the policy included in our employee policy manual. Pastor Amanda provided the MN policy. If we add it, it will be the New #18 in the manual.

Motion to include unemployment insurance policy in the employee policy manual as #18. MSC.

Employment Policy Amendments

Executive committee is working on a zero tolerance for policy concerning foul language and it will be ready by next meeting

Request for preliminary Council meeting minutes and preliminary Annual Meeting minutes.

The congregation doesn't see the council minutes for 1 ½ - 2 months after the meetings. Several members have asked to see them sooner. Council agrees that the congregation should see the minutes in a timely manner. Therefore, the secretary will send preliminary minutes to council members soon after the meeting and ask for any corrections. After that, the preliminary unapproved minutes will be sent out to the congregation. This will be within a week or two of the meeting.

The Council reviewed the annual meeting minutes from November 9, 2025, and they will be sent to the congregation as preliminary minutes in the January Connection.

SOS Submission: No submission.

(continued)

Announcements:

Committee reports are due January 10. Council reps should remind Committee Chairs.

Julie Fritz- Council Secretary will be gone for the January exec meeting, January retreat, and January Council meeting. Council will need someone to take minutes.

Meeting Dates – January Exec Team 13 @ 3:00PM – Council meeting January 22nd @6:30P

A motion was made to adjourn at 7:20pm. MSC

Closed in Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Julie Fritz

Salem Lutheran Church Council
Preliminary Unapproved Meeting Minutes
January 22, 2026

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: Randy Holmwig, Pastor Amanda, Don Hales, Lynn Hansen, Mark Boike, Nate Van Risseghem, Sylvia Hoge

Members Absent: Alan Niemann, Julie Fritz, Tina Royer

Opening Prayer: Pastor Amanda

Approval of the Agenda MSC

Approval of the minutes from the December 16, 2025 meeting MSC

Approval of the Financials

December envelope offering \$3788.24

Loose offering for 2025 was just over budget

No reserves needed to be used

There is concern that we need to build up the Building Repair/Maintenance fund because the building is getting older and at some point, the roof may need replacement

Motion to approve the end of the year 2025 Financial Report. MSC

Pastor's Report

- Christmas Eve Worship – 304 attendees. Up from the three previous years.

(continued)

- Teddy Skattum Funeral
- Preparation for the Council Retreat
- End of Epiphany celebration on Feb. 15 with donuts from Sherri Godfrey
- Kid's Club extended until May
- Worship planning for Lent and noon rotation with Crosby pastors
- Confirmation curriculum and preparation of mentor pages for Lent
- Organizing Council's goals for clearer communication and continued development
- Follow-up with hospice persons and medical updates from members (14 pastoral visits)
- Sunday, Feb. 15 at 2:30, Salem is hosting meeting of the Heartland Conference
- March 8 is Camp Sunday
- April 5 – Easter Sunday

Committee Reports

- Faith Formation – March 29 First Communion Lesson Make and Take with the Easter Story
- Outreach – Monthly report to congregation
 - Seeking sweeper for Skid Steer
 - Repairs to box truck
 - Gathering suitcases and clothing for Honduras
- Worship and Music – Sung liturgy during Epiphany season
 - A manual is being prepared for training volunteers in the sound & control booth
- Capital Appeal – Myron Midthun resigned because he is away too much of the time.
 - Paul, Randy, Mark, and Aimee are working together on the next building loan.
- Memorial – Camperships – Families will pay the deposits, and the committee will pay the rest.
 - They are looking into buying a laser bulb for the Fellowship Hall projector. Sanctuary bulbs will be fixed when the lift is here.

Unfinished Business

- Deerwood Days 2026 – because it is in the Job Description of the Director of Outreach, Jason will oversee the activities. Mark Boike will meet with Jason.
- Council Retreat Recap – 3 pages were handed out
- Employment Policies – adjustments are being made to improve the language being used in the workplace
- Annual Reports are due by 1/30
- Honduras Compromise

(continued)

- Audit – by not having an external audit, Outreach cannot complete grant applications. The church does not have money in the budget for an external audit this year. An internal audit is being organized. The recommendation is that Outreach could explore paying for their audit if it is necessary for grant applications.

New Business

- VLM Delegates – Whitney Fischer and Raye Cragun MSC
- Lenten Worship – Meal 5:15 Worship 6:30
- Lenten Offering to be divided between the local food shelf and House of Blessing in Honduras
- Easter Worship April 5 at 8 AM and 9:30 AM
- Summer Worship will be at 9 AM

Announcements

Meeting dates –Feb.17 Exec Team @ 3 PM

Council Meeting Feb. 26 @ 6:30 PM

Motion was made to adjourn. MSC

Closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted.

Lynn Hansen



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:00am Praise Worship 9:50am Sunday School	2	3 9:00am Piecemakers 12:30pm Game Day 5:00pm Worship and Music Meeting 6:00pm Faith Formation	4 3:00pm Women's Bible Study 5:30pm Salem Ringers 6:00pm Confirmation 6:15pm Choir Practice 7:00pm Praise Team Practice	5 11:30am Catholic Charities Meal Distribution	6 8:00am Men's Bible Study	7
8 9:00am Traditional Worship 9:50am Sunday School	9 1:00pm Bible Study at Heartwood	10 9:00am Piecemakers	11 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	12	13 8:00am Men's Bible Study 12:00pm Office Closed	14 9:00am Serpent Lake Association Meeting
15 9:00am Praise Worship 9:50am Sunday School	16	17 9:00am Piecemakers 1:00pm Outreach Governing Board Meeting 3:00pm Executive Team Meeting	18 3:00pm Women's Bible Study 5:30pm Salem Ringers 6:30pm Ash Wednesday Worship	19 6:00pm Cuyuna Range Lions Meeting	20 8:00am Men's Bible Study 5:30pm Honduras Fundraiser Dinner in Fellowship Hall	21
22 9:00am Traditional Worship 9:50am Sunday School	23	24 9:00am Piecemakers	25 3:00pm Women's Bible Study 5:15pm Lent Evening Meal 5:30pm Salem Ringers 6:30pm Lenten Evening Worship	26 6:30pm Council Meeting	27 8:00am Men's Bible Study	28