

2025 Annual Report

Salem Lutheran Church

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Pastor's Annual Report

Dear Beloved in Christ of Salem,

June 1, 2025 started our time together. When (then) Bishop Candea asked about my plans as your interim, I stated that I wanted to spend the first six months simply getting to know you. Believe it or not, I was nervous to come to Salem. Your reputation among my colleagues is stellar. Many churches can say they understand hospitality and welcome, but there was a belief among my colleagues that you all really live it out. I've gotten to see that firsthand and I can attest that the rumors are true. Everything I heard about Salem before coming here has proven to be true and I couldn't be happier.



In my first six months, I have observed a few things (none of which, I hope, come as a surprise to you). 1) You are passionate. There is a passion here for all the things that you do. I've seen (and heard) it in the music, in the planning, in the dreaming, in conversations, even in the fun we have together. 2) You take the Gospel seriously. It's one thing to **know** Jesus. It's a completely different thing to **live** Jesus. The people of Salem live Jesus. We may not always get it right, but I have never met a group of people so focused on living out the message of love, grace, mercy, and peace so holy and so wholly. 3) You have figured out what matters. Because of several moves over the last few years, you have figured out what matters and what doesn't. So what if the candles don't get lit before the announcements begin? So what if there's a typo? Because you take the Gospel seriously, everything else pales in comparison. But, because you've figured out what matters and what doesn't 4) You aren't afraid to laugh and have a little fun. This is probably my favorite thing about all of you. In my opinion, church is a place that should be fun. There is a time and place for seriousness. But, it's also okay to laugh and actually enjoy church. It's obvious that we enjoy spending time together. And lastly, 5) You're ready for what is next. I'm not sure what is next, but I am confident we are ready to move in a forward direction — even if that means failure. Thanks to the hard work of town halls, listening sessions, Kansas Leadership Center (KLC) sessions, prayerful discernment, and amazing leadership, I know we're ready for some forward movement. We may not know exactly what that looks like, but it feels like we're done having conversations and we're ready for action.

I'm not a fortune teller (I mentioned this in a recent sermon) but I see 2026 as a year of discernment. I know that we have wrestled with our place (literal and metaphorical) at OPLC and I am grateful that we have assembled a real estate team that can help us discern these next steps. As we discern what is next, I hope the question we keep asking ourselves is "how does this help us live out the Gospel?" How are we called to be church *now*? It's easy to wish and dream we were the church we were in 1996 or hope we'll be the church we dream of being in 2030, but we need to be the church that God has called us to be *right now*. And there's nothing to be ashamed of about the church we are right now. We have something that people are looking for — that people are hungry for. Let's not let a location stop us!

Here are some of my highlights from the first six months together:

- **Vacation Bible School!** What a way to kick off our time together! It was one of my first events I participated in and I loved a way to get to know our kiddos in an environment that was fun and full of learning.



(continued on next page)

Pastor's Annual Report (cont.)

- **Synod Assembly.** I had the honor of representing Salem (along with Renee Loya and Joyce Benedict) at our annual Synod Assembly. It was a Holy Spirit filled moment and it reminded me why I love being a leader in this church.
- **Visiting our homebound members.** I make it a practice to visit our homebound members weekly. These are holy moments and I am grateful to be able to include these folks in our congregation even if they can't physically be with us. I look forward to our visits every week.
- **And lastly, Confirmation!** It was a huge honor to be able to affirm the faith of four of our young people: Faith, Ava, Ruby, and Nora. These four have been such a joy to get to know and their faith has inspired me. The future of the church is very promising with these four as part of our community!



For 2025 I had:

- 0 funerals
- 0 weddings
- 0 baptisms
- 4 affirmation of baptism (Confirmation)
- 1 mission partner added via baptism at another church
- 12 mission partner transfer membership via request and action of council

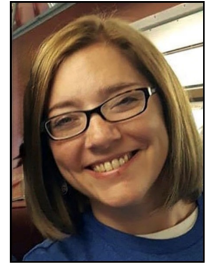
Peace in Christ,
Pastor J



Congregational Council President's Report

Greetings to you, my friends. As we walk into 2026, I'm very excited by all that is happening at Salem as we discern what God has in store for the future of our community.

In spring 2025, we bid farewell to Pastor Jon as he accepted a call to a congregation in Lawrence, Kansas. While we were sad to say goodbye, we're grateful for the time we had with Pastor Jon and the leadership he provided during some challenging years together.



On June 1, we were thrilled to welcome Pastor Jealaine Marple as our interim pastor. We're so thankful to have Pastor J's thoughtful and caring leadership, and we look forward to working alongside her as we travel our path forward.

During the first half of 2025, we gathered Salem community members at roundtable discussions to help us discern where we should focus our efforts as a congregation. The discussions were lively and deep and honest and, if I am truthful, sometimes difficult. But in the end, we learned so much about our community members' hopes and dreams for Salem as well as their fears and what they feel our greatest challenges are.

Three areas arose during discussions as ones we would focus on in 2026. These were:

- **Engagement:** Connecting members in between the early and late services on Sunday mornings as well as engaging people in ministry.
- **Growth and outreach:** Inviting others from outside Salem into the love we share through Christ and engaging them with our shared work as a community.
- **Space:** Using our current space better and exploring the feasibility of a space of our own for Salem. To that end, we have put together a location task force to begin exploring our options for a space of our own.

At the same time that we've been dreaming about our future, we have continued to encounter God, grow in our faith, and serve the world around us.

In 2025, we experienced vibrant worship and were inspired by Pastor J's sermons. From our youngest members in Sunday school through adults in weekly Bible studies, we've explored God's word together and helped each other discern its meaning in our lives. Our youngest members have shared Bible stories with us through musical performance. We've been inspired and called by God through the musical gifts of others in our midst.

We've fed the hungry in our communities through Pantry Pack, Johnson County Home-Delivered Meals (formerly known as Meals on Wheels), and serving meals at Project 10-20, the only low-barrier cold-weather overnight shelter in Johnson County. We've advocated for our neighbors experiencing mental health crises and homelessness, struggling to find affordable housing, and seniors trying to age in their own homes through the Good Faith Network.

I'm proud of how resilient our community has been, and of the ministry we have continued to do together even while we faced tough times. I'm grateful to Pastor Jon, Pastor J, our staff (Heather, Shari, Jeff, Luke, and Austin, our custodian) and many, many volunteers who support our amazing ministries. I'm thankful for the opportunities we have had to collaborate with Overland Park Lutheran and Overland Park Presbyterian churches this year. I'm also grateful to the members of the Church Council who have faithfully led and focused on the vision and mission of this congregation. And I am grateful to the Salem members who attended a roundtable and shared their honest thoughts.

Challenging times are hard. Our journey together has been bumpy for the last few years, to say the least. First, thank you for staying with us! We know better than most that a church is not a building — it's each and every one of us and all of us together. I'd like to take this opportunity to ask you to stick with us as we explore our location options and discern our future together.

Peace,
Lorel Brown
2025 Salem Lutheran Church Council President

AMONG OUR PEOPLE

	2024	2025
Member Households	124 (34 inactive)	126 (58 inactive)
Baptized Members	310 (105 inactive) ***	297 (128 inactive) ***
Confirmed Members	245 (76 inactive)	239 (96 inactive)
Students Confirmed	3	4
1st Communion Students	1	2
Weddings Performed	1	0
Memorial Services	3	1
<i>Attendance Information:</i>		
Avg. Weekly Attendance (in-person)	78 (205 out of 316 participated in worship)	78
Avg. Weekly Attendance (online)	77	59
Ash Wednesday	63 in person, 90 online	85 in person, 59 online*
Avg. Lenten Service	attendance not recorded	attendance not recorded
Maundy Thursday*	62 in person, 154 online	95 in person, 61 online
Good Friday*	92 in person, 93 online	85 in person, no livestream
Easter Sunday**	In-person: 61 trad., 182 cont. Online: 83 trad., 80 cont.	In-person: 65 trad., 130 cont. Online: 47 trad., 61 cont.
Avg. Advent Service	attendance not recorded	attendance not recorded
Christmas Eve**	7:30 p.m. service: in person: 97, online: 119	7:30 p.m. service: in person: 95, no livestream
<i>Members Received</i>		
Baptized	0	1
Affirmations	3 confirmed	4 confirmed
Transfer In	2	0
Re-instated	0	0
<i>Members Released</i>		
Transfer Out	0	12
Removals / Withdrawals	0	1
Deaths	5 adults	1 adult

* combined with Overland Park Lutheran Church and Overland Park Presbyterian Church

** combined with Overland Park Lutheran Church

*** this number reflects a correction to the database

Salem Lutheran Church
Balance Sheet
Consolidated - December 2025

	12/31/2025	12/31/2024
ASSETS		
BANK ACCOUNTS		
CHECKING ACCOUNTS		
BMO CHECKING ACCOUNT		
GF Checking Account	\$0.00	\$1,596.61
General Fund - Restricted	127.21	733.93
Pr Discretionary Checking	1,781.89	2,629.37
Design Team Checking	138.83	138.83
Endowment Fund Checking	2,183.82	8,158.03
Building Fund Checking	8,010.49	11,349.07
Mem Fund General Checking	0.00	320.00
Mem Scholarship Ckng	2,231.56	231.56
Mem Ministry Ckng	96.04	96.04
Mem Facility Ckng	1,369.08	1,369.08
Thrivent Choice Ckng	1,342.94	2,335.96
Pantry Pack Checking	19,251.87	24,577.79
Children's Budget Ckng	107.75	107.75
Children's Other Ckng	40.00	0.00
Teen Budget Checking	2.77	149.02
Teen Fundraising Checking	2,241.63	1,192.03
Salem Sister's Checking	646.10	680.43
Salem' Men's Checking	0.00	82.21
Altar Guild Checking	184.64	289.08
Altar Guild - Restricted	648.68	648.68
KC Service Netwrk Ckng	197.42	197.42
Hope Builders Ckng	200.00	200.00
Meredith Ministry Checkin	18,226.07	27,890.47
Salem Investment Checking	-35,000.00	0.00
Subtotal Bmo Checking Account	24,028.79	84,973.36
Subtotal Checking Accounts	24,028.79	84,973.36
SAVINGS ACCOUNTS		
Money Market Account	35,086.58	0.00
Subtotal Bank Accounts	59,115.37	84,973.36
INVESTMENTS		
ENDOWMENT FUNDS		
ENDOWMENT FUND OF ELCA	734,922.72	670,837.31
MEREDITH MINISTRY FUND	218,569.62	192,148.04
Subtotal Investments	953,492.34	862,985.35
TOTAL ASSETS	\$1,012,607.71	\$947,958.71
FUND BALANCE		
Fund Balance	\$1,012,607.71	\$947,958.71
TOTAL EQUITY	1,012,607.71	947,958.71
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$1,012,607.71	\$947,958.71

Salem Lutheran Church
Income and Expense Statement

Consolidated SUMMARY - December 2025

	2025 Actuals Year to Date	2025 Annual Budget	2025 YTD Budget Difference	2024 Actuals YTD	2026 Annual Budget
INCOME					
CONTRIBUTION INCOME	\$222,662.53	\$240,000.00	(17,337.47)	\$239,758.83	\$22,000.00
OTHER FUND INCOME	\$12,799.94	\$500.00	12,299.94	\$18,280.79	\$500.00
INTEREST INCOME	25,633.13	24,000.00	1,633.13	24,922.05	24,000.00
INVESTMENT GAINS	98,006.99	0.00	98,006.99	124,738.03	0.00
TOTAL INCOME	359,102.59	264,500.00	94,602.59	407,699.70	244,500.00
EXPENSES					
FIXED EXPENSES					
PASTORAL STAFF	\$100,706.03	\$113,413.22	12,707.19	\$112,906.11	\$122,661.12
SUPPORT STAFF	91,332.40	104,578.00	13,245.60	104,380.45	92,470.00
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE	17,207.75	21,882.00	4,674.25	21,361.63	20,600.00
BUILDING & GROUNDS	37,791.48	42,300.00	4,508.52	35,763.32	40,900.00
BUILDING FUND PROJECTS	1,815.00	9,149.07	7,334.07	300.00	0.00
Subtotal Fixed Expenses	248,852.66	291,322.29	42,469.63	274,711.51	276,631.12
MEMORIALS					
MEMORIAL-SCHOLARSHIP	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,000.00	0.00
MINISTRIES					
COUNCIL	210.56	700.00	489.44	182.09	700.00
BENEVOLENCE	16,817.00	17,160.00	343.00	18,016.88	15,860.00
THRIVENT CHOICE	2,348.02	0.00	(2,348.02)	513.59	0.00
PANTRY PACK	8,035.48	0.00	(8,035.48)	26,417.75	0.00
NURSERY	0.00	100.00	100.00	0.00	0.00
CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES	544.91	1,250.00	705.09	1,094.56	950.00
VBS	1,414.43	1,600.00	185.57	1,332.63	1,600.00
TEEN MINISTRY	5,883.18	6,000.00	116.82	9,099.49	5,500.00
SALEM SISTERS	34.33	0.00	(34.33)	0.00	0.00
MEN'S MINISTRY	100.00	0.00	(100.00)	175.00	0.00
ALTAR GUILD	846.35	1,150.00	303.65	1,246.96	940.00
WORSHIP & MUSIC	2,595.66	3,700.00	1,104.34	3,308.13	3,250.00
FELLOWSHIP / EVANGELISM	1,951.11	2,500.00	548.89	2,080.92	2,400.00
OUTREACH	3,174.94	1,850.00	(1,324.94)	2,893.25	1,800.00
OUTREACH MISSION MINISTRY	0.00	0.00	0.00	9,230.00	0.00
CONFERENCES & CONVENTION	835.00	850.00	15.00	875.00	700.00
GENERAL MINISTRY EXPENSE	809.96	700.00	(109.96)	548.65	1,000.00
Subtotal Ministries	45,600.93	37,560.00	(8,040.93)	77,014.90	34,700.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	294,453.59	328,882.29	34,428.70	352,726.41	311,331.12
EXCESS INCOME/EXPENSES	\$64,649.00	-\$64,382.29	129,031.29	\$54,973.29	-\$66,831.12
<i>Less Cash on Hand:</i>					
			Dec. Bal		
General Fund Checking			0.00		0.00
Endowment Fund Checking			2,183.82		183.82
Mem Scholarship Ckng			2,231.56		500.00
Building Fund Checking			8,010.49		3,150.00
Meredith Ministry Checking			18,226.07		11,650.00
Cash Flow Balance			Net Deficit		(51,347.30)
<i>Additional Resources:</i>					
Thrivent Choice Checking		1,342.94			
Endowment Fund		734,922.72			
Meredith Invested Fund		218,569.62			
		<u>954,835.28</u>			

2025 MINISTRY TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

Administrative

Finance Team

The Finance Team continues to work with council, staff, and Pastor J to develop the annual church budget; count offerings weekly (including noisy offering); and manage church income and expenses and coordinate with staff for special fundraisers and the youth team for their programs. This year, we adjusted the team's schedule to accommodate the annual meeting occurring in November. The team actively evaluates expenses (from lawn care and rent to insurance) throughout the year to find the best value for the church.

We finished the year better than expected. The 2025 budget projected a shortfall of \$31,328. Due to careful spending by teams and staff and the faithful giving of this community we finished with a deficit of just \$7,500 for the year. That amount will be withdrawn from the Endowment Fund so that we start 2026 at \$0.

Huge thanks to our Financial Secretary Janice VanLaningham and our Treasurer Joyce Benedict — both of these positions required effort every week to keep things on track — and to the Finance Team (Joyce Benedict, Ryan Konen, Lynn Ross, Janice VanLaningham, and Steve Wise). Finally, thank you to the offering counters: Joyce Benedict, Kelli Carr, Mike Dougherty, Ryan Konen, David Mitchell, Lynn Ross, Jarred Schubert, Tanya Trana, and Steve Wise.

— *Submitted by Steve Wise and Lynn Ross*

Benevolence

In 2025 we continued to give part of our offering to benevolence.

The following was a representative of our giving:

Hollis Renewal Center.....	\$1,725.00
Metro Lutheran Ministry.....	\$1,000.00
Synod.....	\$12,910.00
Harvesters.....	107.00
The God's Child Project.....	\$500.00
Johnson County Home-Delivered Meals.....	\$575.00
Total.....	\$16,817.00

The above was a representative of our giving.
Thank you from the Benevolence Team.

— *Submitted by Bob Roediger and the Benevolence Team*

Administrative (cont.)

Stewardship

Team members: David Mitchell, Drew Shaneyfelt, Taylor Schubert

Our fall stewardship campaign kicked off on Sept. 28. We organized a month of ministry moment bulletin inserts, temple talks, a stewardship video, Time/Talent Survey, and a potluck meal between services on Commitment Sunday.

The campaign concluded on Sunday, Nov. 2, as mission partners brought forward their Statements of Intent and Time/Talent Surveys for 2026.

Results:

2025 pledges: 41 — \$184,930 general fund plus \$1,200 pledged to the Pantry Pack Program

2026 pledges: 37 — \$156,575.96

We would like to thank all of the mission partners that provided food for the potluck.

We would also like to thank Jarred Schubert, Lorel Brown, Bob Roediger, Leah Konen, Katie Lange, Greg Beutel, Joyce Benedict, Linda Trudell, Julie Bowers, Mikhaelle Heald, Mike Dougherty, Jen Beutel, and Darri Ussery for sharing their stories through temple talks and ministry moment bulletin inserts.

Thank you to Shari Van Baale for supporting our communications and Drew Shaneyfelt for putting together the stewardship videos.

Thank you for all you contribute to Salem Lutheran Church. We look forward to what's to come in 2026.

May God's abundance continue to bless you.

— *Submitted by Taylor Schubert*



Worship Ministries

Salem has successfully navigated another year of transition in 2025! We began the season of Lent with a combined Ash Wednesday service on March 5. After Pastor Jon left for his new call, several lay leaders spoke about their ministries during our *Unfailing Light* Lenten midweek services. On April 2, Salem and OPLC children presented the story of Zaccheus in our *Hurry On Down* musical. On Palm Sunday, eleven Salem youth did a dramatic reading of the passion scriptures in both worship services. We celebrated First Communion with children from OPLC and Salem on Maundy Thursday, and worshipped together on Good Friday and Easter Sunday.



We began June with our wonderful new interim, Pastor Jealaine Marple, who brought children's moments back into our weekly worship services. The summer continued with our fun week of VBS and combined worship in June, and our children's musical about David and Goliath, *The Bigger They Are*, in August. Our four confirmands read their faith statements on Oct. 19, and were confirmed on Oct. 26.



Our midweek Advent services included *Holden Evening Prayer*, and eleven Salem and OPLC children performed *The Real Christmas Story* on Dec. 17, after which we packed Christmas meal boxes for Pantry Pack. On the third Sunday of Advent, the choir performed *The Heart of Christmas* cantata with eighteen adult and teen singers in both worship services. We collaborated Christmas Eve with each congregation leading one Christmas Eve candlelight service, providing three very different worship opportunities for our combined community.



Thank you so much to all who have faithfully assisted in worship with electronics, readings, leading music, greeting, lighting candles, altar care, decorating worship space, and providing beverages and treats for fellowship. I am so glad to call Salem my church family, and I am grateful to serve you.

In Christ's love,
Heather Lewis
Director of Worship and Music



Service & Outreach Ministries

Good Faith Network

The Good Faith Network (GFN) continues to work on issues that are important to our faith community and our neighbors in Johnson County.



This past year ...

Salem hosted three listening sessions and 29 individuals joined/rejoined Salem's justice ministry.

- Elder care was added as a campaign issue at the 2024 Community Problems Assembly. The research team identified and advocated for CAPABLE, a program to help seniors age in place. GFN obtained a financial commitment from Kansas Department for Aging and Disability Services (KDADS) to fund half of a pilot program in Johnson County.
- We were excited to see our advocacy and persistence come to fruition by attending Johnson County Mental Health Center's ribbon cutting and open house of the JoCo Adult Crisis Stabilization Unit in November.
- We continue our work on affordable housing and homelessness. Renee Loya, Chris Wise, and other Salem team members have attended Board of County Commissioner (BOCC) meetings throughout the year to give public comments and advocate for our neighbors.
- Salem added our voice at the Nehemiah Action this past May, where almost 1,500 people asked for proven solutions to issues that are important to our community. While we did not get all the answers we wanted on the issues we will continue to advocate for our neighbors.

In His Service,
Renee Loya

Johnson County Home-Delivered Meals (formerly known as Meals on Wheels)

Salem currently has eight individuals trained and volunteering to deliver meals on a weekly basis, so each of us normally delivers only once a month. These are Kathy and Mike Kostroske, B.J. and Terri Fevold, David Hellwege, Renee Loya, Sirena Shaneyfelt, and myself. We are responsible for delivering the Lenexa North 1 (LNX1) route every Tuesday and the Overland Park North 3 (OPN3) route every Wednesday. This is a great opportunity to connect with homebound individuals and share a smile and brief conversation. We may be the only individuals these clients see on a regular basis.

The Lenexa route is primarily to the Rosewood Place apartment complex at 8500 Pflumm Road. The Overland Park route is to 8-10 individual homes in northern Overland Park. This route has been

relatively consistent for quite some time, and clients are almost like family friends that I enjoy checking in on when I deliver once a month. Delivering meals takes between 1 and 1 ½ hours of time each week. Please contact me if you are available to assist on either of these days,



— Submitted by Joyce Benedict, coordinator

Service & Outreach Ministries (cont.)

Pantry Pack Program

Salem's Pantry Pack Program continued to provide groceries to those in need in our Lenexa community. In 2025, we served 40-55 families per week. Each family was offered a client choice bag of non-perishable groceries and their choice of available fresh fruits and vegetables, breads, and desserts at every distribution. In addition to our regular weekly distributions, we had several special distributions over the course of the year. A special thank you to the youth that organized a drive to provide Christmas meals for our neighbors in need.



Salem's Pantry Pack Program continues to be a Harvesters agency. Our relationship with Harvesters has allowed us to meet the increased need in our community. In addition to our food sourced at Harvesters, we have volunteers picking up bread donations from two Panera locations on a weekly basis. We also receive weekly donations from Hy-Vee and the bread runners of Prince of Peace Catholic Church.

Salem's Pantry Pack Program remains committed to serving food to those in need in 2026. We would love for you to actively join our mission! We have leadership roles available, as well as opportunities for volunteering at our weekly distributions.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlotte Wallenburg

Sewing for God's Child

Salem is showing Christ's love to sisters far away! Thanks to three Thrivent Action Team funds and many donations of materials we sent a box of 120 sanitary pad kits — as well as clothes, toys, and school supplies — to The God's Child Project in Antigua, Guatemala, in early 2025.

While some work happens on the third Saturday morning of each month in Koinonia Hall (bring your own scissors — there are snacks!), many other sewists take project elements home to work on. The troop of Girl Scouts who meet at OPLC graciously cut and rolled 200 towels to include in kits as part of a meeting. The next box should be ready to ship this spring.

We look forward to heading back to God's Child Project in May of 2026; it's not too late to register!

— Submitted by Katie Lange



Fellowship Ministries

Fellowship Events

Our team enjoys organizing events for the entire congregation to enjoy, along with having snacks and coffee available every Sunday for fellowship.

As has become tradition, we kicked off the year with our annual Salem Bowling Bash event in January for all members and friends.



We hosted another tried-and-true annual Cinco de Mayo Bingo Night and Potluck at Koinonia Hall in May, where fierce competition for the top prizes was matched by friendly heckling between the callers and players.

We want to appeal to all generations of our congregation and had a blast at mini-golf in September. Thankfully it was much warmer this year vs. previous years!



Finally, we rounded out the year in November with a family-friendly board game night at Koinonia Hall. It seemed the adults played more *Guitar Hero* than the kids, yet everyone had fun sharing a potluck meal and trying their hand at both classic and new board games.

Our team likes to keep some traditions by hosting familiar events each year, but we also enjoy brainstorming ways to mix things up and love to hear any input from the congregation for ideas of events. To make these events accessible, our team usually covers or helps with the costs so that everyone in the congregation and their friends can join in the fun.

— Submitted by Jarred Schubert



Fellowship Ministries (cont.)

Salem Men

Monthly Breakfast: The men's breakfast continues to gather for breakfast and fellowship on the first Saturday of every month at the Santa Fe Café in Overland Park. About 3-10 attend each month. All men are welcome to attend!

— Submitted by Greg Beutel



Fellowship of the Stein: Stein Night is an opportunity for men to gather and socialize at a variety of bars and restaurants. We meet usually from February through October with anywhere from 2-8 men attending. This year, we met at Limitless Brewing, Martin City Brewing Company, Brewbakers Bar & Grill, and other local restaurants to chat and get to know one another better. It is a fun, relaxing fellowship opportunity held on the third Thursday of each month. Any suggestions to increase participation are encouraged. Contact me with any ideas you might have.

— Submitted by Steve Wise



Fellowship Ministries (cont.)

Salem Women

Book Club: This ministry impacts the lives of those who attend by building relationships with each other, nurturing individual thoughts and ideas, and supporting each other through our ups and downs. Our book selections usually involve issues dealing with morality, relationships, women in war times, both historical fiction and real-life events, and some fictional thrillers. Each Christmas, we have a White Elephant exchange using books. This year we added a spring/Easter book refresh, which involved bringing in one or more gently used books to swap for another book.



— Submitted by Kathy Kostroske

Bible Study: The Women's Bible Study group meets on Thursday mornings in Koinonia Hall from 9:30 to approximately 11:00 a.m., September through May. We take a break from Memorial Day until Labor Day. With Cheryl Padgett moving away, we are currently down to six women who attend on a regular basis. Our Bible studies vary, and this past year we focused on studying the book of Psalms. Our purpose is to deepen our understanding of the Bible and how Jesus asks us to live our lives. We have an honest and open sharing of joys and challenges in our lives and strive to make everyone feel valued. All women or friends of Salem are invited to join us on Thursday mornings.

— Submitted by Joyce Benedict

Fellowship Ministries (cont.)

Salem Women (cont.)

Fellowship of the Vine: Our women's social group continues to work on strengthening our relationships with each other through activities planned throughout the year. In 2025, we dined out at the Melting Pot on the Plaza; made a ceramic piece at Paint Glaze & Fire; played trivia at Craft Putt and music bingo at Tanners; and had our annual holiday party, where we exchanged cookies and ornaments and decorated bags and cards for our Pantry Pack folks. Our hope for the new year is to increase participation for fellowship with more ladies from our congregation. We welcome any and all suggestions for fun things to do in our community!

— Submitted by Chris Wise and Angela Waechter



Fellowship Ministries (cont.)

Creation Care Team

The mission of our Creation Care Team is to care for God's Creation as dedicated stewards of Earth and neighbor, proclaiming God's promise of hope and healing for all. Our goal is to provide activities and/or information to engage members of both our congregations as we grow in our Creation Care ministry in five areas of congregational life: worship, education, buildings and grounds, advocacy, and personal discipleship.

Utilizing the resources of the Central States Synod 2025 Creation Care Plan (created by the CSS Lutherans Restoring Creation Mission Table), the following activities and events were highlights of our ministry and mission:

1. Lent — daily devotion/action calendar from Janet Cooper of All Saints Lutheran Church in Blue Springs, Missouri — Lent: Creation Awareness. Bulletin board to record responses. Janet presented at adult forum on Feb. 23.
2. Feb. 10 — WEALTH Day at the Capitol — two participants
3. March 19 — Paul Trana presented a Lenten talk at worship
4. March — Spring lawn cleanup at Lewallen's house
5. March 22 — participated in Lutherans Restoring Creation retreat at Hollis Renewal Center. Earth Hour was observed as a part of that event
6. March 10 — KIFA Advocacy Day at the Capitol
7. April 1 — Attended informational session at St. Andrew's Christian Church regarding proposed gas plants by Evergy
8. April 6 — Spring Stream Clean at Young's Park
9. April 27 — Greening of the Cross
10. May 31 — Blessing of the Community Garden with gardeners and members of OPLC
11. June/July/August — Monarch watch with habitats
12. Aug. 24 — Rabbi Moti Rieber from Kansas Interfaith Action came
13. Sept. 14 — Crafted and Compost Collective were scheduled to present at adult forum. Cancelled due to congregational meeting
14. Sept. 20 — Five members attended "Faithful Responses to Climate Change" conference at St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. Pastor Sue and Noni Strand also attended the online webinar series, "Faith Leadership During Climate Change." Both were offered through the Buttry Center for Peace and Justice of Central Seminary.
15. Oct. 5 — Season of Creation worship
16. Oct. 10-11 — Congregational campout at Hollis Renewal Center
17. Ongoing effort to engage all congregational ministries in Creation Care as a part of their activities/vision



Current members include Paul Trana from Salem and OPLC members Lisa Provence, Barb and Gary Groening, Noni Strand, Jean Stippich, and Pastor Sue Tarkka. We are grateful for the support from the pastors and staff members of both congregations.

— Submitted by Noni Strand, Overland Park Lutheran Church

Fellowship Ministries (cont.)

Dinner 4 Eight

Everyone enjoys eating a great meal and a Dinner 4 Eight group is a great opportunity for good food and conversation. This is a time to get to know each other on a deeper basis and build stronger relationships. For 2025-26 we have seven couples and two singles that are organized into two separate groups. Each group is free to organize when they want to meet, how they want to meet, and where they want to meet. This is simply another opportunity to get to know our fellow mission partners at Salem.



— Submitted by Joyce Benedict, coordinator

Coffee and Conversation

Coffee and Conversation is just that — an opportunity to share a cup of coffee and random conversations. We average 4-8 individuals that meet on the last Tuesday of the month at the coffee shop inside of Foundry Church on Lackman Road in Lenexa. When Foundry Church is closed, we move to the tables inside of Hen House. We have no agenda and just check up on each other. We frequently talk about sports or travel plans. Please feel free to join us on any last Tuesday of the month.



— Submitted by Joyce Benedict, co-leader

Education

Children's Ministry

The work of Salem's Children's Ministry Team touches the lives of our youngest members from birth through 5th grade. From baptism classes to Sunday school to First Communion classes to Vacation Bible School and more, our ministries give us the chance to connect and grow alongside some of our most curious, energetic, and passionate members.



In 2025, we held Sunday school in one all-ages group and explored various Bible stories through activities in drama, music, games, cooking, video, and art projects. Numbers have fluctuated a lot; we've welcomed 1-2 some weeks, 3-4 most weeks, and occasionally found ourselves in a rowdy group of 8-10. We played a ton of games and made a lot of crafts together, including two nativity ornaments at Christmas and a fun edible nativity activity too.

Highlights of the year were seeing relationships blossom in small group conversations. Being in an all-ages class has its challenges, but it affords us all the opportunity to help someone younger sometimes and also learn something new from an older student. I've seen the kids get to know each other well and truly care for each other on a weekly basis.

This year we continued to work together with Overland Park Lutheran Church and Overland Park Presbyterian Church on some children's ministry initiatives. First, we offered our second combined Easter Egg Hunt together this spring. It was a rousing success, with many neighborhood kids coming out to join in the fun. We handed out treat bags and made a concerted effort to make sure those with dietary restrictions could safely enjoy the fun. We had all nut-free candy, mostly gluten-free candy, many non-candy prizes, and a trade-in station where kids who got treats they can't have were able to trade in for safe choices.



We had an end-of-year celebration in the spring and kick-off celebration in the fall, where OPLC kids were able to join us for some bounce house fun and outdoor games and bubbles.

In the spring, Pastor Jon and Pastor Sue worked together to hold a joint First Communion class for kids from Salem and OPLC. Participants took their First Communion on Maundy Thursday together at a joint worship service.

This past summer, OPLC and Salem worked together for the second year to put on a successful Vacation Bible School for more than 40 participants, including many adults with developmental disabilities who were able to join in the fun. The planning team was very happy with the outcome and learned a lot that will help us be even more successful in our planning next year. From the fabulous decorations to the delicious dinners to the celebratory singing to the engaging learning experiences, it was a week we'll all remember for a lifetime. New this year, we were able to provide gluten-free and dairy-free dinner options each night, which was very appreciated..

The Children's Ministry Team thanks all the adults who have engaged in ministry with our kids in 2025. It takes a village in any year to provide the time and space and connection our kids need to grow in faith and serve God in so many ways. This year, I continue to appreciate the support of team members as we have helped our youngest members grow in their faith as well as in their relationships with one another, our Salem community, and with the Overland Park Lutheran community as well.

— Submitted by Lorel Brown

Education (cont.)

Youth Ministry

Salem middle and high school youth continue to stay active, with 12 kids 6th-12th grade participating in Sunday school, Confirmation, and other youth events. In the first half of the year we bowled, watched the Super Bowl, organized and prepared a meal for Project 10-20, celebrated our graduates, and confirmands celebrated the end of the school year at BRKTHROUGH. Eleven of our youth presented a dramatic reading of the passion scriptures on Palm Sunday, and we were strongly supported by the congregation with our stock drive fundraiser in April, which really helped to offset cost for summer camp.



The youth directors in our Collective youth group with Atonement Lutheran, Holy Cross Lutheran, Advent Lutheran, and Kaw Prairie churches continue meet every month to plan events to connect the youth in our sister churches. We had fun at The Rush Funplex in February, a middle school glow party in April including a glow-in-the-dark Easter Egg Hunt at Kaw Prairie, and in the summer our middle schoolers traveled together to Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp in June, and high schoolers in July. We met at Advent Lutheran for a bonfire and outdoor sports in September, had fall fun at the Louisburg Cider Mill in October, and helped organize the MLM Christmas Store in December.



Confirmands read their inspiring statements of faith on Oct. 19, and were confirmed on Reformation Sunday, Oct. 26. We celebrated a wonderful year with a Christmas party at the Lewis house and organized and shopped for traditional ingredients for 50 Pantry Pack Christmas meal boxes. We then coordinated filling the boxes during our last Advent worship service on Dec. 17 while singing Christmas carols and walking around the sanctuary.



Thank you so much to our parents and other wonderful adults for leading our Sunday school classes and the hours of support during Confirmation classes and other youth events. Our youth are very involved assisting in worship by song leading, reading scripture, acolyting, running electronics, and serving as assisting ministers in the traditional service.

I am honored to work with these fantastic kids who have grown up together at Salem, as they continue to grow together in their faith journeys.

In Christ's love,
Heather Lewis
Director of Youth Ministries

