

Our Savior's Voice

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

359 Leonard Street N - West Salem, WI 54669

www.oursaviorswestsalem.org

608-786-0030

January 2024



Vision Statement:

***We are a church centered in Christ,
inviting all into a community of worship,
nurturing all to be disciples of Jesus.
Together we reach out to make a difference
here and throughout the world.***

Our Savior's Voice

January 2024

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Pastor's Reflections ...

Generosity!

As I was preparing to write this article, everywhere I turned money was being spent ... or should I say, being given away. Within a 36-hour period of time, over \$25,000 was designated to be shared with those in need ... Ruth Circle shared their offerings of \$1,200 ... the Norwegian Dinner disbursement was \$5,500 ... and the Mission Endowment Fund proposes to disburse \$18,800 in the new year based on earnings in 2023. Now that's generosity!!

And our Hungry Jar disbursements in 2023 were up significantly. Could be because we have chosen recipients who are near and dear to members' hearts ... or could it really be because we have many eager children willing to cruise the aisles shaking down folks during the "mission moment" time ... who could resist their precious smiles and pleading eyes, and watching them enthusiastically dance down the aisle to put the money they collected in the hungry jar???

I was struck by all of the generosity that was happening.



Pastor Jon and I like to watch reruns of "oldies but goodies" TV shows that we watched as kids. Recently we were watching episodes of "Night Court" ... long story, short, one of the more "sleezy" characters found himself in charge of giving away/sharing millions of dollars of someone else's money. He was supposed to contribute to charitable organizations, helping those in need, providing for those less fortunate, making a difference in the lives of people. At first it was hard for him because he was one who was, let's just say, very self-centered, self-absorbed, and wanted nothing but the finest and most expensive things for himself. For him

to have to “give away” money, even if it wasn’t his own, was a challenge, even painful. He would much rather have kept it for himself, regardless of the source. But, in the end, as he let loose and shared the wealth, he found satisfaction and joy in giving, in seeing how his generosity made a difference

Generosity
changes everything

in the lives of others who truly were in need, how even something small made a huge impact. Something for us to think about ...

But, generosity doesn’t always have to mean money.

All you have to do is look around and see people who are giving of their time to make a difference in the lives of others – whether it’s here within the walls of this church ... Sunday school and confirmation teachers and students, choir members and musicians, worship helpers, providing food for fellowship, caring for the building and property, extending a warm welcome, worshipping and praying ...

or at their work place ... educators, healthcare, public service, retail, care of creation, construction, communication, food service, law enforcement and legal assistance ...

or out in the world ... feeding the hungry, providing shelter, caring for the neighbor and stranger, protecting the vulnerable, lending a listening ear and words of wisdom ...



Aren’t we generous?!

But even all of this generosity pales in comparison to the generosity of the little baby born in the manger on Christmas. The baby who would grow up to share the good news, to care for the most vulnerable, to welcome the overlooked, to give his very life for each one of us, for the

forgiveness of our sins, because he loves us and claims us (and all people), no matter who we are, who we profess to be, what we do or don't do ... now that is **Generosity!!**

As we begin a new year may generosity be a part of the fabric of our lives ... generosity of our time, our faith and witness, our resources ... and may we find joy in the giving. But most importantly, may we bask in the generosity of the baby born in the manger.



Being generous together with you,

Pastor Jean

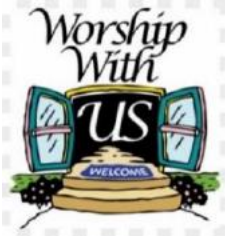


Thank you for all of your good wishes and thoughts this Christmas Season. Thank you for your support of the ministry here at Our Savior's. We look forward to seeing you in the New Year.

Blessings ...

Pastor Jon, Pastor Jean, Kris, Josh, Linda, Laurie, Eric, Jill, and Karen

Worship Opportunities



**Saturday 6 PM
Sunday 8 & 10:30 AM**

Meanwhile...

***Livestreaming of 10:30 worship
is here!***

Find the livestreaming link on the
home page of our web site
(www.oursaviorswestsalem.org).



Livestreams remain on the YouTube page for later viewing
as well, or go to the video page of our web site to view
worship when the time works for you!

Thank You!

**Huge thanks to Dean Olson for
making the livestream work, and
for all his work on our new tech
resources.**



Lenten Worship

Yes, it's hard to believe ... but Lent is just around the corner! With an earlier Easter (March 31), Lent begins on Wednesday, February 14 with Ash Wednesday worship.

Some things to look forward to:

1. Worship will be at 6:15 PM (yes, you read that right) each Wednesday in Lent.
2. We will join with other area ELCA congregations in a "Lenten Round Robin," meaning that each week a different pastor will share the message.
3. A soup supper is planned to precede worship, beginning around 5:30 PM.

Watch the February newsletter for more details.



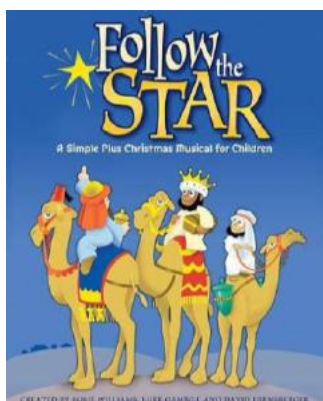
Have you missed gathering together over a bowl of soup before the mid-week Lenten worship services? Well ... miss them no longer! We will once again have a simple meal, along with dessert, prior to the service each week at 5:30 PM. We are getting teams together to make the soup, but we are in need of folks to provide dessert for these meals. A sign-up sheet can be found in the Gathering Area.

Faith Formation ...

Sunday School



Another Christmas program is in the books and we begin a new calendar year. We look forward to gathering with our children and continuing to share our faith and the stories of Jesus. The kids love to sing and will be practicing new songs to share in worship.



THANK YOU

The church came alive on December 10th when the children presented their Christmas Program, *“Follow the Star”*. It was so great to have everyone in church – all the kids, plus families and church members there to support them! And, the kids did an awesome job!

Thank you to our parents for getting the kids to Sunday school each week and to the practice. Thank you to our teachers who worked with the kids each week – Jen Evenson, Audrey Schlifer, Jessalyn Hickey, Amanda Vick, Lindsey Gilberts, Stacey Sjoquist, and Eric Iliff. Thank you to Naoko Giblin and Linda Berg for working on the music. And, a special thanks to Jon Iliff for choosing to direct this year’s program as his senior year high school Panther Portfolio Project.

We debuted our livestream of the worship that morning, so if you missed the program, check out the home page of the website to watch it. Click on livestream – past weeks are archived.

Sunday School Offering ... Water is Life

Projects and initiatives that provide access to clean water and sanitation have long been part of the work supported by ELCA World Hunger as a way to achieve the goal of ending hunger. "In some cases, the most sustainable way to improve food security may be through improving water security." (Hilary Bethancourt, Northwestern University) A simple water well costs \$2,500. We are doing our part to obtain a share of providing a well.



These first months of Sunday School we have collected over \$325!! Thank you!! Check out the bulletin board by Pastor Jean's office to watch our water buckets fill up.

New Members

Everyone (and we mean, *everyone!*) is welcome at Our Savior's, and welcome to our ministries and activities, even if you are not a member.



But ... if you'd like to join the congregation ... we'd love to have you! If you come from another Lutheran congregation, a transfer works best.

Or, if you come from another Christian tradition, we periodically offer a new member class to help you learn more about how Lutherans understand the faith we share. ***Pastor Jon is looking to get a class started, so this is a great time.*** For more information on membership and how it can happen for you, see Pastor Jon or Pastor Jean!

Faith Formation ...



Confirmation Ministry

January ... and confirmation resumes after a brief Christmas break.

6th grade meets on Wednesdays at 6 PM, continuing to work through the story of God at work in our world, moving into the New Testament.

7th grade will continue to work on the Ten Commandments. They will also exercise their “faithful art-ing,” and learn about self-care. They do not have class on January 31.

8th graders have classes on Finance on January 3 and 10 (pick one!), and again on January 24 and February 7 (pick one!). They also have class on January 17 and 31 on the Apostle’s Creed.

9th graders have classes on Finance on January 3 and 10 (pick one!), and again on January 24 and February 7 (pick one!). No class on January 17 and 31.

See Pastor Jon for more information – and remember, there is always room for new students!

Friendly reminder ...

7th through 9th graders should be working on their Worship Notes ... you are **EXPECTED** to do 20 notes before the end of April! Check the bulletin board across from Pastor Jean’s office to see how you’re doing!



As our college students are studying in challenging environments at home or on

college
connection



campus, we keep them in our thoughts and prayers. This month please pray for: **Emma Fortier** (UW-Stout), **Jacob Hickey** (WTC), **Max Williams** (UW-L), **Brennan Kennedy** (UW-L), **Regan Peterson** (UW-M), and **Everett Michael** (UW-P).



Adult Bible Study

*Wednesdays 9:30-11 AM
In the Library – or join us by Zoom*

We are still studying ... so much to learn ... and, yes, really, fun to be had! Come and join us as we study the coming Sunday's gospel reading, ponder God's message to us, and have some time for good conversation and fellowship.

See Pastor Jon for more information, or to get the Zoom link.

**Coffee & Conversation
at Linda's Bakery
9:30 AM on Tuesday, January 9**



Hungry Jar Offering for January – Our Savior's LaCrosse Women's Clothes Closet



The mission of the Women's Clothes Closet of Our Savior's LaCrosse is to support the dignity of all women providing new or

gently used clothing, accessories, and sundry items to women who are entering the workforce, in the workforce, or otherwise in need. Started in 1997, the Women's Clothes Closet was created as a project by a student social worker at the University of Wisconsin – La Crosse. In 2022, the Women's Clothes Closet had 162 new clients and 1,271 existing clients, and received 289 donations that included clothing, shoes, new undergarments, jewelry, accessories, coats, make-up, and personal care items. New visitors to the Women's Clothes Closet can choose three complete outfits. Returning visitors can select one outfit per visit, up to two times per month. No questions are asked about income or employment status.



Thank you for your generous donations to the Hungry Jar ...

♥ November – Prison Ministry - \$361.36



Annual Meeting

The annual meeting for Our Savior's has been set for Sunday, January 28, 2024, following the 10:30 worship service. Among the agenda items:

- Review of the past year's ministries.
- Adoption of a mission budget for 2024.
- Selecting leaders for our work together.
- Approval for work to repair storm damage.
- Approval of proposed Mission Endowment disbursements.
- Adoption of constitution revisions as recommended by the ELCA.

We encourage you to join us as we work together as partners in the mission God has entrusted to us. Please note that by constitution, absentee balloting is not permitted. We will review our ministry over the past year, set our mission priorities for the coming year, and select leadership. We will also consider several minor revisions to the constitution of the congregation. Please plan to join us!



ANNUAL REPORT

2023 Annual Report deadlines

It's hard to imagine, but the new year is right around the corner. And that means getting an annual report together to share with the congregation all that has happened in 2023. We are looking for reflections from the various committees, teams, and ministries to be included in the report. Please note we will need those reports, preferably electronically, in the office as follows: **Written and Financial Reports by Monday, January 8.**

Norwegian Dinner Update

The ladies met in early December to distribute the proceeds from the Norwegian Dinner. Thank you to all who worked and dined ... your efforts will benefit the following:



LaCrosse Tent City Kits	750
World Hunger	500
Lutheran Social Services	500
Sugar Creek Bible Camp	300
Lutheran Campus Ministry	300
Salvation Army	250
Lutheran Disaster Response	500
St Clare Health Mission Sparta	500
LaCrosse Warming Center	500
LWR—Quilt Shipping	50
OSLC Summer Lunch Ministry	300
Sleep in Heavenly Peace	250
Care & Share Food Pantry	500
OSLC Sugar Creek Camperships	<u>300</u>
Total	5,500



**If you missed it last year, not to fear
... it's back! ... bring a dish to share
or just come and enjoy the treats ...**



Second annual Mardi Gras Fest

Shake off the winter blahs!

Come one ... come all

**Sunday, February 11
3 - 5 PM**

Join us for ...

**Food ... prizes ... music ...
activities for kids ...**

**Cook up a batch of your favorite recipe, bring it to church, along with a copy of
your recipe. We'll serve small samples, and see whose recipes are the favorites!
Talk to Pastor Jean for more details. Sign up in the Gathering Area!**

Sample the food ... and vote for your favorites!



“Fall” Stewardship Ministry

Our fall stewardship ministry is continuing. Really? Yes! Because stewardship never really ends. It's about day in day out, faithful living. Always seeking to use what God has entrusted to us wisely and with care. And that's what we invite you to do – to join us in making a difference in the world around us. Every day, for a lifetime!

We also invite your statement of intent for supporting our ministry together. That intent is important for us as we enter a new year, and for you as a reminder that our response to God's call is not about how we feel at the moment, but how we commit ourselves to...faithful living!

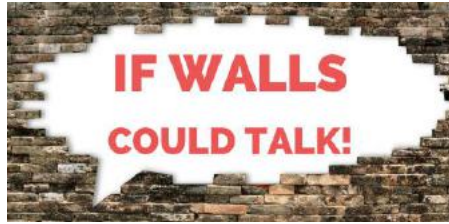
So...for all who shared a statement of intent, THANK YOU. And for those who haven't, there's still time – anytime! And to all, for all your support in 2023, and in years past, THANK YOU!



Tech Invite

As we continue to roll out our new tech in the sanctuary, we are looking for folk who are interested in “working the system.” If you might be one of them, Dean Olson invites you to join him during worship and see how it all comes together – and maybe discover that it isn't as overwhelming as it looks! See Dean or Pastor Jon for more information.





Sharing Our Story ***God is at work in us!***

One last call ... we are looking to hear ways in which God is at work in you ... out in the world, in your daily life.

First, check out our video on the home page of our web site. Then ... share with us ways in which God is at work in you out in the world.

- In your employment/career/regular daily activities
- In your volunteer work through organizations
- In just the normal stuff you do every day!



A short story of what you do and how it makes a difference is all we need – though a picture too would be great! Could be a picture of you at work, or something that conveys the message.

We'd like to use this to make a sequel ... so make sure whatever you share is something we can share with others (no names will be used.)

So, watch the video ... share your story ... and know that God is at work in you!





Thank you ...

... to the December newsletter mailing crew: Connie Blunck, Bev Bockenbauer, and Carol Thompson.

... to those who helped put up the trees and decorate the sanctuary for Christmas – Jeff & Melissa Haldeman, Clara Cody & Weston & Amara, Carla Burkhardt, Jason & Nate Stefferud, Lydia Jothen, Ty, Candice, Emelia, Addy & Ellie Tlustosch.

... to the 7th grade confirmation students who led the Hanging of the Greens worship service – Paige Christianson, Chloe Drury, Camille Godlewski, Claire Gross, Sophia Johnson, Addison Kendhammer, Max Langrehr, Alana Steinke, Adelyn Tlustosch, and Ariel Wuensch.

... to Linda Berg, Eric Sorenson, and the Senior Choir for sharing “Joy”. The cantata was beautiful! Thank you for your long hours of work preparing and practicing.

... to Linda Berg, Dean Olson, Jon Hetland, Elliott Sjoquist, Lily Twite, Kyle Gresens, and Donna Christianson for leading us in Eggnog and Carols. And, to all who came and raised their voices in song! It was a fun time had by all!

Received from others ...

... Thank you for the bag of treats you gave me. I really enjoyed the variety of candy and chips. It is so nice to be remembered. I am thankful for the ministry of Our Savior's with seniors.

Velma Schmidt

... It's hard to find the words to tell you how much your bag of goodies meant to me when it was brought up to me by my CNA. Thanksgiving is a time to count our blessings and that bag of goodies was a great reminder for those of us that are shut-ins that we are not forgotten. In this time when it seems that we Christians must band together and announce to people everywhere that we believe that Christ died for us on the cross and was raised again! It's wonderful to be remembered when our family is so far away!

Errol Kindschy

In Loving Memory

Memorial Gifts Received ...

*In Memory of Tom Niemeier for
Prayer Shawl ministry from*

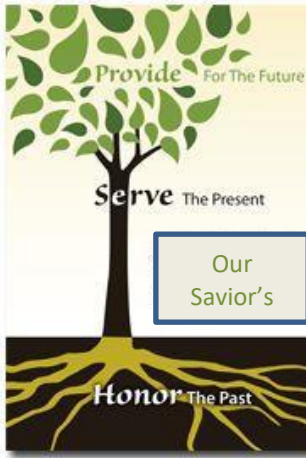
Family & Friends



Pastoral Acts:

Funeral – Bergene Wilcox - December 16

Capital Fund Appeal



The Capital Fund Appeal continues! To date over \$85,000 has been given or pledged toward our goal of \$250,000 in three years. THANK YOU to all who have stepped forward to help maintain our building and facilities as we move into the future. Remember, we are “fixin’ for Jesus!”

We continue to invite intents and gifts to meet

these needs. It is never too late to share your intent with us. Remember that gifts can be made by marking your envelope “building fund,” or you can make an electronic gift. Use the QR code or go to our giving page at oursaviorswestsalem.org/giving/.



Thank you all for your support and your sharing with us. For more information contact the office or speak with one of the pastors.

Mission Endowment Fund



We continue our series of articles on Endowments, what they are, what they do, and ways you can support the ministry of endowments that work for you.

Stock and Mutual Fund Gifts

Shares of Common Stock (and mutual funds) are often used to make gifts to ministries. Most often the donors avoid paying capital gains taxes on appreciated shares of stock while receiving a charitable income tax deduction for the value of the stock. Even though capital gains rates have been reduced, significant tax savings from the gift of common stock or mutual funds may be available to you while you benefit Our Savior's, or any other favorite ministry.

Has this happened here before? It sure has! It works, and works well, supporting the ministry of Our Savior's while providing tax benefits for the donor. Really, a "win-win!"

For more information speak with one of the pastors, or with a member of Our Savior's Mission Endowment Team – Jeff Rich, Lee Friell, Katie Drury, Melody Schmitz, Scott Thompson.



**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

Financial Support Ministry

THANK YOU!!! *Thank you for your continued financial support of our ministry together!*

As we come to the end of the year your gifts are even more important to assist in finishing the year, ready to move into a new year of mission and ministry!

Financial gifts can be shared in worship, by mail, or placed in our locked mailbox. You can also make gifts electronically. Go to www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/giving or use our QR code.



***Thank you for your support.
We are grateful for your partnership as
we proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ!***

By the numbers...



Ministry is not a numbers game, but numbers can help us get a feel for what is happening as we carry out our part of God's work in the world! Numbers help us

measure our faithful response to God's call, both in our financial support and our worship life. So...here is a snapshot of our ministry...by the numbers!

2023 Ministry at Work			
	Actual-Nov	Actual-YTD	Budget-YTD
Income	\$31,680.78	\$292,273.22	\$331,306.25
Prepaid		\$13,362.00	\$13,362.00
Expense	\$32,076.69	\$340,237.42	\$349,351.89
Net	(\$395.91)	(\$34,602.20)	
2023 Worship Life – Weekly average			
	In-building Actual	Online Estimate	TOTAL
November	152	70	222
Year to Date	154	70	224



Audit Report

The Audit Committee, consisting of Jim Anderson, Sharon Olson, and Dori Jensen, has completed the audit of the church financial records for 2022. They have submitted the following report:

The Audit Committee has completed an audit of the church's accounts and financial practices. In conducting the audit, the Committee reviewed the WELCA account, the Youth account, the Mission Endowment Fund and selected months of the general fund account. The Committee also reviewed financial procedures for handling, counting and depositing offerings; procedures for payroll, payments to vendors and accounts payable; procedures for IT access and backup; procedures for the Youth account, including Scrip cards. The Committee did not find any account irregularities and found that procedures and internal controls in place are generally adequate to protect the finances of the church. Audit Committee recommendations from the prior audit have been adopted and written into procedure.

The audit also included recommendations which are currently being reviewed and implemented as appropriate.

We are grateful to the committee for its diligent work and look forward to working with it in the future to maintain both the integrity and the transparency of our financial accounts.



Congregation Council

The Congregation Council met on Monday, December 11, at Pastor Jon & Pastor Jean's home, with President Jeff Haldeman presiding.

At this meeting the council:

- Approved the minutes from the November meeting, and received financials for November and the pastors' reports.
- Heard reports on a number of congregational ministries.
- Heard a report on new interior signs and affirmed the direction the task force is taking. Will receive update at January meeting.
- Heard that Rachel Holthaus will be stepping back from her position as youth director but will continue to be involved. Pastor Jon will seek to convene a group to consider future directions.
- Designated the pastor's housing allowance for 2024 for tax purposes. Noted that this does not change overall compensation.
- Heard that Ledegar is preparing a detailed proposal for repair of storm damage for consideration at the annual meeting.
- Discussed nominations for council and other positions.
- Heard that the annual report is in process, and that the Administration Committee expects to meet in early January to prepare the budget proposal.
- Decided to designate half of the coffee fund balance to the capital campaign, and to designate half of future coffee fund proceeds to the campaign as well.

The council next meets on Monday, January 8 at 7 PM. If you have questions, or if you have ideas for enhancing the ministry of Our Savior's, contact Jeff Haldeman or one of the pastors.

Worship Leaders - January



January 6-7

6 p.m.

Worship Assistant
Communion Assistant
Welcoming Team

Mya Peterson
Kim Arentz
Vick Family

8 a.m.

Worship Assistant
Communion Assistant
Welcoming Team

Madison Phillips
Trudy Drugg
Berit Gilbertson

10:30 a.m.

E Quackenbush
Tracy Hesse
R & B Clements

Home Communion
Altar Guild – January

Rasmussen Family
Wendy Amundson

January 13-14

6 p.m.

Worship Assistant
Communion Assistant
Reader
Welcoming Team

Anya Tenner
Chad Vick
Ann Sprain
Dennis & Ann Sprain

8 a.m.

Worship Assistant
Communion Assistant
Reader
Welcoming Team

Anna Witte
Berit Gilbertson
Jeanne Peterson
Eckland Family

10:30 a.m.

P Christianson
Jason Stefferud
Dawn Affeldt

Home Communion

Carol & Scott Thompson

January 20-21

6 p.m.

Worship Assistant
Communion Assistant
Welcoming Team

Chloe Drury
Jill Iliff
Johnsrude Family

8 a.m.

Worship Assistant
Communion Assistant
Welcoming Team

C Godlewski
Alison Hemker
Tlustosch Family

10:30 a.m.

Claire Gross
Denise Jones
E & J Hansen

Home Communion

Daryl Wermedal

January 27-28

6 p.m.

Worship Assistant
Communion Assistant
Welcoming Team

Sophia Johnson
Judy Gilbert
Dave & Angie Hemker

8 a.m.

Worship Assistant
Communion Assistant
Welcoming Team

A Kendhammer
Lynette Ender
Giblin Family

10:30 a.m.

Max Langrehr
Carol Thompson
Baumgartner/Fullwood

Home Communion

Dottie Baumgartner





Living Lutheran Magazine Changes

Living Lutheran is your source for news, reflections and stories from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) and its local and global companions. They cover religious news and social issues, congregational life, global and domestic mission, family matters, spiritual practices and resources, and more.

As the magazine of the ELCA, their mission is to:

- Nurture awareness of Christ's presence in our lives and the world
- Share stories of God's people living their faith
- Connect readers with the global Christian community
- Provide an open forum for discussion
- Challenge readers to bring God's grace and care to all

In the past, Living Lutheran was a print magazine that required a paid subscription. The congregation was responsible for signing people up. Starting in 2024, the magazine will only be online, there will be no cost (it is free), and individuals who would like to receive the publication are responsible for signing up (subscribing) themselves. Use the link to subscribe: www.livinglutheran.org/subscribe/

Direct your
**Thrivent Choice
Dollars**
Today!



Thrivent Choice Dollars

Remember that if you are a Thrivent member you may have “Thrivent Choice Dollars” to direct. Our Savior’s is one of the many potential recipients of your choice dollars, but your direction needs to be made each time. A number of Our Savior’s folk direct their choice dollars – do you? See Thrivent’s web site for more information or stop by the office and we will help you out.



Care and Share Food Pantry

The Care and Share Food Pantry is open Saturdays, 10 AM to Noon. We are thankful for all the donations we have recently received. Many local families have benefited from your generosity. Monetary, food, and personal items are always appreciated.

Scrip Cards Available

Scrip cards make great gifts and help support Our Savior’s Sugar Creek Bible Camp Camperships and World Hunger! You can’t beat that!!

KWIK TRIP

WOODMAN'S



Culver’s, Kwik Trip, Kwik Trip car wash, Woodman’s.

Available after worship services and in the office during the week.

2024 Offering Envelopes

If you haven't already received your offering envelopes for 2024 in the mail, you should be receiving them soon. As the New Year begins, if you still need envelopes, please let Kris know in the office and she will gladly get some for you. **Note: it is possible you will have a new number in 2024, so be sure to use the 2024 envelopes beginning in January.**



Also note, if you use electronic giving, you will still receive envelopes as you need to have a giving number.



- ♥ Jesus is Lord and Savior.
- ♥ All are welcome, and we are intentional about that welcome.
- ♥ God gifts and calls every one of every age to be a difference maker in the world.
- ♥ We treasure the gift of creation and embrace the call to protect God's world.
- ♥ We value the gathering of God's people in worship and all our ministries.
- ♥ We seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit in a world that has changed dramatically.

Web Site: www.oursaviorswestsalem.org
OUR SAVIOR'S STAFF

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Laurie Noelke, Handbell Choir Director/Assistant Worship Musician
Eric Sorenson, Senior Choir Director
Karen DeSchepper, Financial Secretary
Josh Corning, Custodian



**Newsletter Deadline –
January 15**

Our Savior's Lutheran Church
359 Leonard St N
West Salem, WI 54669

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
Paid
West Salem, WI
Permit #21

Change Service Requested