

All Saints Lutheran Church Newsletter – March 2026

S6065 South Park Avenue
Hamburg, New York 14075
716-649-6266
WEB SITE: www.allsaintshamburg.org



Rev. Paul Mertzlufft, Pastor Emeritus
Office Administration, Louise Peters
Beth Cheney, Editor
E-MAIL: allsaintshamburg@gmail.com

Dear Friends,

One of the stories that my grandmother loved to tell was about me and a time I misunderstood a few words she said. I was 3 years old, and I was playing “store” at her house. It had been an incredibly busy day for my grandmother. She had done a lot of cooking and cleaning and she was sitting down taking a break. I walked over to her and asked “what would you like to buy at my store?” She mumbled the words, “just some peace and quiet.” I walked back over to my store, looked around at all the cans and things I had taken from her pantry. After a few moments I walked back to her empty handed and announced, “Sorry Mom, I don’t have any peas and carrots.” My grandmother laughed and laughed. Over the years she would frequently ask for “peas and carrots” instead of peace and quiet.

In this month’s “now you know” we are going to talk about sharing the peace in church. I had to wonder, even though we know the word peace, we may not really understand what it means. Just like 3-year-old Serena didn’t understand what her grandma was asking for, we might think we are just saying hello to the people who are at worship with us.

Where did sharing of the peace come from? The early Christian churches had their share of conflicts (after all, they were just learning how to be “church.”). They realized that it was not right for them to share in Holy Communion with these kinds of issues hanging over their heads. Jesus is very clear in the gospels that before we bring offerings to God that we should first be reconciled to any one we have conflict with. The first churches created this practice, and they called it the “sharing of the peace.”

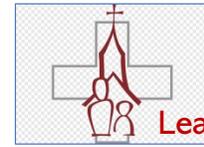
In that spirit let me give you a few thoughts on how Jesus would want us to share the peace with each other.

1. If we have an issue with a brother/sister, we should seek them out **first** in sharing of the peace. Many of us like to seek out our best friends or people we are closest to, but there are other times after worship is over to chat with our friends.
2. There is no right way to share the peace! You can wave, shake hands, or hug. Be mindful of another person’s preference, in a post-covid world many people (myself included) prefer not to touch others right before communion to prevent the spread of illness.
3. Sharing of the peace is not a time for catching up on another’s life. This is about reconciliation and sharing Jesus’ peace, we can catch up with each other when worship is over.
4. We cannot always share the peace with everyone, but we should seek to share the peace with different people each week.

“Now you know!” Please feel free to share any questions and your suggestions for my next topic!

God’s peace,

Pastor Serena



Lead us, Lord

- Pastor Serena Mollenkopf-Grill, Transition Pastor
- Council President, Ann Spear Mayer
- Council Vice President, Lori Gawlak
- Council Secretary, Barbara Kurasch
- Financial Secretary, Frank Wald
- Treasurer, Christine Jancewicz
- Financial Consultant, Joanne Mauer

Council Members:

- Beth Cheney
- Joan Fabian
- Marc Schwartz
- Linda Spencer
- Beverly Zier

COME TO ME,

ALL YOU WHO ARE
WEARY AND
BURDENED,
*and I will give
you rest*

MATTHEW 11:28

Happenings in the call process

On Monday, January 12th, the call committee met with Rachel Sosebee, our synod mobility specialist. We reviewed call process and got to know each other a bit better. We were sent off to form questions for a candidate interview.

On Tuesday, February 3, the call committee and a couple council members "mock" interviewed Pastor Jeff Wilson from Trinity Lutheran, a pastor from our conference, to gain practice in interviewing. It was an enlightening, fun experience!

- We are feeling better prepared for when a candidate is presented to take that next step.

- Keeping All Saints and future candidate in our prayers. Please, also, keep us in your prayers.

Beth Marcin, Martha Muck, Frank Wald, John Zier, Bryan Sullivan, Christyn Sullivan



The Special Gifts and Memorial Committee wish to thank our All Saints family for the love and support as we honored Pastor Mertzlufft for the beautiful Stained Glass booklet he developed for the congregation. If you were unable to attend the coffee on January 11th, please pick up your family copy on the table in the narthex. If you want an additional copy, please contact Beth Cheney or Bev Zier.

NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

The deadline for April Newsletter is **March 15th**. Please have all articles in by this time. Thank You! Send to Beth Cheney @ bwc143@verizon.net

If you have any interesting tidbits or stories you would like to add to our "Church Buzz" page on our website and Facebook page, give the information to Beth Cheney or email to Beth at bwc143@verizon.net

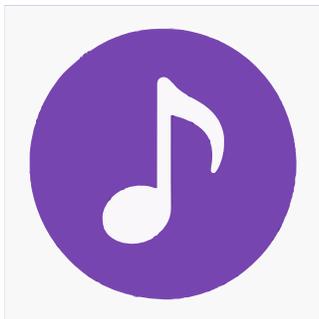


SECC Meeting on Thursday, March 5th at 6:30 p.m. at All Saints. We will be organizing the February collection for the homeless families. EVERYONE is welcome to come and help us!

Council Highlights



- Pastor Serena thanked everyone for prayers and cards received on the passing of her mother.
- In compiling our annual report to ELCA, Pastor Serena calculated our 2025 average attendance for Sunday services as 38 people/week.
- Lynn Whitworth will lead all the Lenten Wednesday services at both All Saints and First Lutheran. The theme will be “Beneath the Cross of Jesus.”
- This year’s audit will occur on 24 March 2026 and involve Joanne Mauer, Beverly Blette, Chris Jancewicz, Ann Spear Mayer and Beverly Zier.
- Frank Wald has taken over as Financial Secretary
- Because we do not have enough members interested in the paper version of Lutheran Magazine, the cost will be \$19, rather than \$17.
- We need to replace our hot water tank. Vastola Heating and Cooling will install a new tank next week for \$3810.
- Excess tools and leftover equipment stored in the boiler room will be removed by the cleaning crew on 4 March.
- Kevin Swanson, who looks after our gas well, unfroze our frozen meter and switched us off of National Fuel and back onto our own supply. We drew from National Fuel for February 2-11.
- The Call Committee held a practice Interview on 3 February with Pastor Jeff Wilson from Trinity. Interviews will include 45 minutes for the Committee to ask questions of the candidate, and 45 minutes for the candidate to ask questions of the Committee.
- As a result of Pastor Jeff’s comments on the MSP, minor changes may be made to the current MSP.
- We will invite our regular Facebook viewers to become a Virtual Neighbor of All Saints. We would then email them the weekly bulletin and the monthly newsletter.
- A new feature, called The Church Buzz will be added to the webpage and updated weekly. We encourage all members to contribute interesting news, tidbits, humor, and opinions.
- Council is updating the official membership list of the congregation and hopes to have an accurate list this spring.



**Choir Practice
is now
scheduled for
Fridays at
10:15 a.m.
through Lent.
Everyone is
welcome to
join.**

Do you have a Thrivent Life Insurance Policy or other Thrivent financial product?

If so ... Choice Dollars distribution is available January -March 31st or quarterly. Please consider directing Thrivent’s charitable outreach funds to All Saints!

Lenten Services Schedule

- † Ash Wednesday 2/18 at All Saints
- † 2/25 at First Blasdell
- † 3/4 at All Saints
- † 3/11 at First Blasdell
- † 3/18 at All Saints
- † 3/25 at First Blasdell
- † 4/2 Maudy Thursday at All Sain
- † 4/3 Good Friday at First Blasdell



The members of All Saints Family have prayed for the following people for the last 30 days. Please continue to keep them in your prayers.

- † Family of Vicki Chrisman
- † Family of Robert & Mary Ann Moeller
- † Paul M. Mertzlufft

Annual Reports are due by April 1, 2026. Please send your reports to Barbara Kurasch at bkurasch@gmail.com



First day of Spring is March 20th! In 2026, the March equinox happens on March 20 at 10:46 A.M. EDT. This falls on a Friday and is the astronomical beginning of the spring season in the Northern Hemisphere and the autumn season in the Southern Hemisphere.



HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

March Birthdays

Carter Hibbard	3/6
Joelle Amelia Marcin	3/11
Wyn Mertzlufft	3/15
Claudia Massett	3/16
Gregory Blette	3/19
Judy Westphal	3/19



March Anniversaries

Scott & Pamela Berchtold	3/17/2001
Lana & Richard Pavlik	3/27



Barbara Kurasch has been selected to receive the Magi Award!

The Magi Award –The Magi Awards are presented by the Lutheran Foundation to recognize individuals of exceptional service in their congregations in Western New York. Recipients are honored for their dedication, altruism and support of local ministries, social service, and community programs. The Lutheran Foundation Banquet will be held on May 1, 2026. Information for the awards banquet below.



Real Talk with Ryan...

All Saints Lutheran: Newsletter

All the World's a Stage

Jesus was a carpenter, and a carpenter's son.



by Ryan Lotocki on February 7, 2026

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances;
And one man in his time plays many parts... - *As You Like It*, Act II, Scene VII

Fun Fact: The Globe itself was constructed entirely of English Oak. But you won't find that anywhere in the creation story...

Green English Oak to be specific. Meaning that the unseasoned timber was used somewhere within 3-18 months of felling, making a carpenter's job much easier.

The green in green oak isn't a reference to the color of the wood, but rather the state of it. To be considered green indicates a high moisture and sap content that makes shaping, carving, and crafting the wood much easier than seasoned timber. A soft and pliable wood such as green oak is highly valued amongst carpenters and woodworkers, and used as the primary material for building frames such as Shakespeare's Globe.

The Globe Theatre was first constructed in London in 1599, rebuilt in 1614, and then reconstructed again in 1997 using only English Oak to build the structure. To remain as authentic as possible, no structural steel was used, which, from a modern architect's standpoint, is putting a lot of faith in this wood.

A carpenter, on the other hand, knows its worth. The wood is naturally resistant to decay and insect infestation due to its high tannin content. This, paired with its durability, versatility, and longevity make the wood ideal for framing.

But green English Oak doesn't stay green forever. You see, here's "the problem" with green English Oak: as it naturally dries, it shrinks, it splits, and it moves. It shrinks more in width than in length, and does so unevenly as it dries over the years. It cracks along joints ultimately breaking the wood apart and bending the original beam. While that doesn't sound super structurally stable, when crafted properly, these cracks actually strengthen the frame. Carpenters are proper craftspeople.

Jesus was a carpenter. He was a carpenter's son. I imagine he managed the cracks that occur in wood quite well in his craftsmanship. But, a carpenter was just one of the many parts he played. Some roles call to you, while others whisper or scream, but in the theatre world on very rare occasions, you'll hear, "I was born to play this role." We recognize this calling when an actor is so in union with a character that the portrayal is less of a performance than an authentic, natural, destined reality.

Think Christoph Waltz as Hans Landa, Jason Alexander as George Costanza, or Sir Ian McKellen as King Lear. The roles that become inseparable from the actors themselves.

For many, I imagine the inseparable role Christ plays in their lives is that of savior, light of the world, messiah, healer, waymaker, prince of peace, miracle worker... 'Tis true, Shakespeare, the world the son of God entered is but a stage. A stage in which one man plays many roles.

The role Jesus was born to play, if I may suggest- with their most dramatic of exits and entrances on a wooden cross and in a wooden manger- is none other than... a carpenter?

Hear me out.

A great carpenter understands that the unstoppable, unplannable, and uneven cracks, bends, breaks, and splits that English Oak endures over the years affect a building's structural integrity. By affect, I mean, it makes it stronger.

It clads itself over time, developing this silver-grey patina that can withstand weather. The cracks act as natural stress-relief mechanisms, relieving tension and pressure that make the timber more stable. The splits and breaks allow for drying of the inside increasing the wood's density and durability. The cracks look like damage, (feel like damage), but with careful crafting from caring carpenters, the overall strength and integrity of the entire structure changes for the better with time.

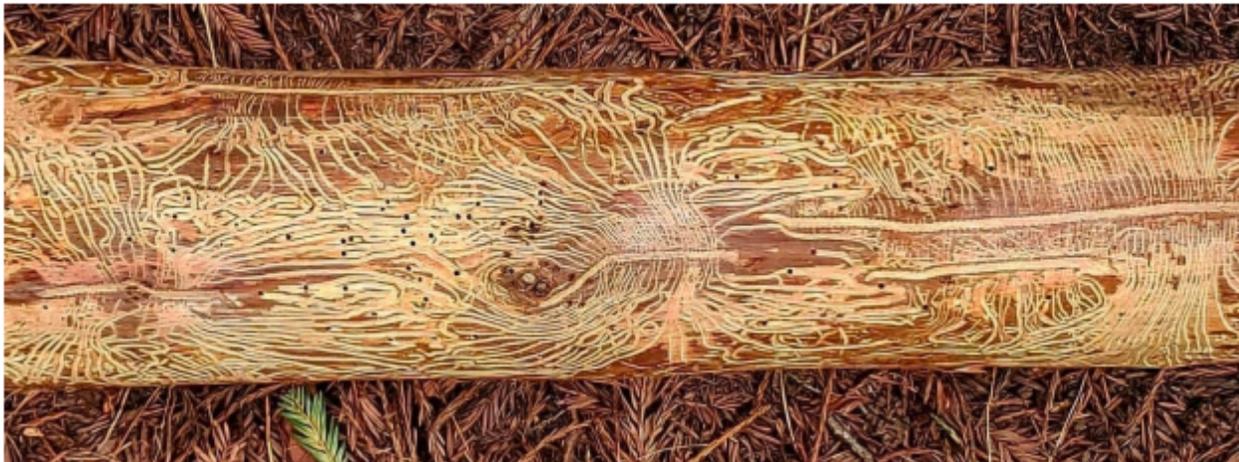
In many ways, Jesus came to Earth to suffer. To understand the process of being cut down. To experience how this world shapes and molds us in both bad and blessed ways. To sit, inside the cracks with us. To be born in, to have worked with, and to have died on the same planks of wood we are. And to have loved while he lived.

To use a quote I recently read from Mandy Morris,

“I don't believe Christ came to teach us how to escape suffering. I believe he came to teach us how to stay inside it without losing our ability to love. This is the deeper miracle: not resurrection alone, but the courage to remain present while every instinct in the body begs to go.”

So yeah, Jesus was a carpenter. What do you expect? He's a carpenter's son.

THIS MONTH'S
GRACE MOMENT



For more writings on my explorations of words and life, you can follow me on Substack:

www.substack.com/@ryanlotocki

The link to All Saints Lutheran's monthly newsletter can be found here:

<https://www.allsaintshamburg.org/newsletter>

FINANCE REPORT

Jan-26

BANK BALANCES

CHECKING ACCOUNT	\$ 14,465.12
SAVINGS ACCOUNT	\$ 6,424.54
TOTAL	\$ 20,889.66

**MONTHLY
ACTIVITY**

	ACTUAL	1/12 BUDGET	DIFFERENCE
CURRENT RECEIPTS	\$ 6,159.00	\$ 11,826.00	\$ (5,667.00)
SPECIAL GIFTS			
CURRENT EXPENDITURES	\$ 10,152.00	\$ 11,826.00	\$ (1,674.00)
DIFFERENCE	\$ (3,993.00)	\$ -	\$ (3,993.00)

YEAR TO DATE

CURRENT RECEIPTS	\$ 6,159.00	\$ 11,826.00	\$ (5,667.00)
SPECIAL BUDGET GIFTS			
CURRENT EXPENDITURES	\$ 10,152.00	\$ 11,826.00	\$ (1,674.00)
DIFFERENCE	\$ (3,993.00)	\$ -	\$ (3,993.00)

**Schedule of Volunteers
March 2026**

	March 1	March 8	March 15	March 22	March 29
Preaching	Rev. Marlene Hyden	Rev. Mary Ellen Larson	Rev. Devie Ellis	Rev. Marlene Hyden	Lynn Whitworth
Deacon	Barbara Kurasch	Barbara Kurasch	Beth Cheney	Ron Heintz	Martha Muck
Usher		Marc Schwartz &	Volunteer		
Reader	Jim Wasmund	Lori Gawlak	Ron Heintz	Barbara Kurasch	Martha Muck
Altar Guild	Martha Muck	Martha Muck	Gail Hellert	Gail Hellert	B & C Sullivan
Cleaning	Martha Muck	Joane Fabian	Bev Blette	Beth Cheney	Martha Muck
Counting	Beth Cheney & Linda Spencer				
Mowing					



Family Promise 2025 Recap

As we run headfirst into another year, I wanted to take a moment to pause and reflect on the impact that Family Promise has had in our community in 2025.

First - WHO did we serve?

Across our programs, we put together a "Snapshot" of a typical family we served in 2025:

Snapshot of a Family

Single Mother.
Over 75% of the families we serve are led by single mothers

Most children are under 10 years old
Over 70% of the children in our programs are 10 years old or younger and 36% are five years old or younger.

Black
Over 80% of the families we serve are people of color and 74% identify as Black



Facing homelessness for the first time
Over 50% of the families we serve are facing homelessness for the first time

Family of 4
The average size family we serve is a family of 4

Successfully housed
95% of the families in our programs successfully find housing



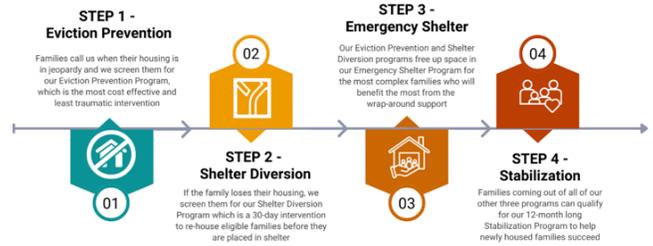
Second - how did we do?

2025 was a HUGE growth year for Family Promise of WNY!
Check out these numbers that highlight our growing impact in this community:

80 → 70

Families that we housed between 2000-2024 Families that we housed just in 2025

FAMILY PROMISE PREVENTS AND ENDS FAMILY HOMELESSNESS



I am so proud of the work that we have done and the growth and success that we have found this past year - **but I know we can't do this work alone.**

I am filled with gratitude that our community remains behind us, uplifting the work we do each and every day to help children and their families stay safe and stable.

Thank you for being a part of our network!
(come celebrate these wins with us at our Meat Raffle next month!)

164 → 302

People served across our programs in 2024 People served across our programs in 2025

60% → 95%

Success rate housing families in 2024 Success rate housing families in 2025

We achieved these incredible outcomes in many ways, but mostly with the addition of **3 NEW PROGRAMS** which have allowed us to expand WHEN we help a family facing a housing crisis.

With these additional programs, we are able to connect with families sooner - thereby preventing or minimizing the impact of homelessness. The graphic below illustrates the dynamic nature of our new programs and how they build on one another, allowing us to support families at any stage of a housing crisis:

FAMILY PROMISE PREVENTS AND ENDS FAMILY HOMELESSNESS

NOTICE ALL MEMBERS OF ALL SAINTS LUTHERAN CHURCH

We are updating our Church Directory for 2026. Please complete and return the membership form below with any changes you may have to the church office by **March 8, 2026.**

If you have no changes, please just sign the form and write **NO CHANGES** and return to the church office.

Thank you, Louise Peters

Notice to all Members of All Saints Lutheran Church

We will be updating our Church Directory for 2026. Please complete the form below whether you have any changes or not by **March 8, 2026.** **Every member of the church should complete their own form.**

Please drop the form in the offering plate or return it to the church office. If you have any questions, please contact Louise Peters. Thank you.

Name: _____

Spouse: _____

Children: _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email Address: _____

Emergency Contact: _____

Relationship: _____

Contact Phone: _____

(Please note, your emergency contact information will not be listed in the membership directory but will remain on file in the church office.)



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