All Saints Lutheran Church Newsletter – November 2026

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Rev. Paul Mertzlufft, Pastor Emeritus
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Beth Cheney, Editor
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Dear Friends,

Did you know that November 1st, All Saints Day is also: *Author's Day, Pumpkin Destruction Day, Calzone Day, Deep Fried Clams Day, Cinnamon Day, Extra Mile Day, Love Your Lawyer Day, Go Cook For Your Pets Day, Sports Fan Day, Give Up Your Shoulds Day, Forgiveness and Happiness Day, Hockey Mask Day, International Pet Groomer Appreciation Day, International Cake Day, Plan Your Epitaph Day, Prime Meridian Day, World Chili Day, Play Outside Day, World Vegan Day, and Bison Day*?

Wow, that's a lot of themes for one day! It does seem like every time we turn around there is a new day for something. I personally appreciated national coffee day on September 29th (I got a free coffee!), but sometimes it seems overdone. It's as if our world has decided we need a special day for everything. I worry that having a special day for everything might overwhelm us and eventually we may not celebrate anything.

The months of November and December have their own theme of thankfulness and giving. We are frequently reminded to be thankful and give generously. We are encouraged to collect food and buy gifts to help those who are less fortunate than we are. November and December are for being thankful and for giving generously to others. But what about the other 10 months out of the year?

1 Thessalonians 5:18 reminds us: "In everything, give thanks." Notice that it doesn't say only in November and December. It doesn't say only when you feel like it. Paul, when he wrote this, was seeking to remind the early church and us that thankfulness is a choice. Even in the darkness, we can choose thankfulness and find that there is always something to be thankful for.
May we every day be God's loved people who "in everything, give thanks!"

God's peace, **Pastor Serena**



- 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

Council Members:

- Beth Cheney
- Joan Fabian
- Marc Schwartz
- Linda Spencer
- Bryan Sullivan

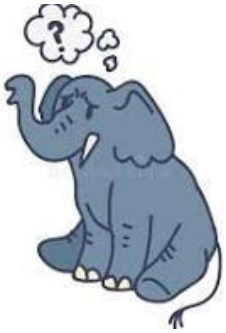
Bible Study at 9:30 am every Sunday with Rev. Paul Mertzlufft. Please join us!

Council **Highlights**
October 2026



- The following donations were approved, based on our mission-giving budget:
  - $200 to Salvation Army Thanksgiving dinners.
  - $300 from Pantry Fund to City Mission for Thanksgiving.
  - $100 from Other Missions to Lutheran Charities Grant
  - $70.42 to Hearts for the Homeless for gravy.
- Upstate New York Synod issued a call for nominations for Bishop. Congregations may submit recommendations from 15 February to 15 March 2027.
- Pastor Serena's office hours will be held by appointment. To schedule, she can be contacted by phone or email: (716)510-2939 or pastorserena@gmail.com.
- First Lutheran has planned separate services for Lent; we are invited to join them. Worship and Music will investigate.
- Based on a recommendation from the Finance committee, monetary donations for memorials, designated, and undesignated gifts will be held in the Wilmington Funds until they are transferred to Cetera Funds semi-annually.
- Rachel Sosebee from Synod will host a Zoom Metting will all four SECC churches on 15 October 2026 to outline a job description for a new pastor.
- Gather 4 Mission will host an evening performance based on the writings of St. Paul on 19 November at 6:30 at Grace Lutheran.
- The contract for snow removal was approved.
- Two Girl Scout troops will be using the church facilities on Monday evenings.
- The Arc lease is now running month to month, as they are looking for a larger facility.
- Social Ministry will augment the church pantry, adding personal care items to the shelves.
- Since we only have one qualifying member for the College/Military Outreach, any unused contributions will be donated to WNY Heroes/Pawsitive Heroes.

Don't forget:
Budget Meeting 29 November 2026
after the Sunday service



NOV 2026

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
01	02	03	04	05	06	07
08	09	10	11	12	13	14
Children's Play practice at First Lutheran 12:30						
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
						Children's Play practice at Good Shepherd 12:30
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					



- Judy Westphal is looking for help with decorating the church for the different seasons. She has all the supplies and is looking for someone to assist her. If you are interested in helping please see Judy.

- Are you interested in becoming an Usher, Reader, Acolyte, joining the cleaning committee or learning how to play handbells please see Beth Cheney.

Gather 4 Misson NEWS:

The four churches will host a children's Christmas Play this year with all the children from each congregation on

Sunday, December 6th at 1:30 p.m. at All Saints.

Hot Chocolate and Christmas Cookies will be served.

Rehearsals will be held at each church on the following dates:

10/17 at Grace Lutheran at 12:30

11/8 at First Lutheran at 12:30 – Lunch Provided

11/21 at Good Shepherd at 12:30,

Dress rehearsal on 12/5 at All Saints at 12:30.

Any child that would like to be part of the Christmas play should try to make each practice at each church if possible.

Real Talk with Ryan

All Saints Lutheran: Newsletter

Where the Sidewalk Cracks

"If the root is holy, so are the branches." - Romans 11:16

by Ryan Lotocki on October 18, 2026

"I like the orange ones the best."



"Me too," she says as we veer left down the dusty path. When we emerge through the changing wood, we stand near the bike path surrounding Hoyt Lake. I cross it clunkily, avoiding a delta of cracks in the asphalt so as not to accidentally step on a crack and break my mother's back. It's the hop-scotch step of a child taken in my size 9.5 men's shoe.

She doesn't seem to mind. I lean my back up against the tree on the edge of the water and look at her, then up into the branches, before my eyes are back on her again.

"They don't typically turn orange, but willow trees are my favorite kind of tree."

The Bible mentions trees and wood 525 times. The only living thing mentioned more than trees in the bible is Humans. Throughout the 66 books, it's evident that trees are not just the throw-in background characters from your 5th-grade rendition of The Wizard of Oz. No, trees are surprisingly central and play a supporting role in the story God's sharing.

The willow tree accounts for six of those 525 mentions. There are, of course, the famous ones. For instance, the olive tree whose leaves a dove brings to signify peace to Noah after the flood. Later (much later), it is unironically Olive Tree branches that Jesus prays under the night before he is crucified. We also have the Palm tree, which, without it, would cause mass Ash shortages on that one Wednesday after Mardi Gras. and lastly,

VeggieTales ensures we will never forget the good old Sycamore Tree that my short king Zacchaeus climbs up to see Christ.

Unfortunately for the botanists amongst us, I don't think the mentioning of trees 525 times was to get a historically accurate list of species. No, in God's story, from floods to fans, to fanfare, trees represent much more than that.

While the autumnal colors are gorgeous and well worth the lost focus of my forward gaze driving down the 90, even the weeping willows offer more than their looks. As Shel Silverstein so ironically illustrates on my paperback copy of *The Giving Tree*, there is a remarkable emphasis on what trees become.

A tree is a place of refuge for some, then food for another. Sometimes it's summer shade, scaffolding, or squirrel homes. Perhaps they become a paper plane or potentially a playground. Come to think of it, the cross on which Christ was crucified was made of wood.

We tend to notice what trees produce and the things they become. But, if we are to better grasp their role in the story, we should look at what sustains it. We must look underground.

Ah yes, those pesky roots which raised the bike path and are causing tripping hazards and mother endangering cracks.

While the things the tree becomes often get all the glory, God is so clearly doing his best storytelling through the roots. Roots, steady. They nurture, they strengthen, and best of all—they grow in the ground. Underneath and out of sight. There in the dark is where God's story is never more alive, and so it is true of the roots.

So much so that our faith is described as such:

"I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. Then Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. You will be *rooted and grounded* in God's love. And may you have the power, with all God's people, to grasp just how wide, and how long, and how high, and how deep his love is. May you experience the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God." - Ephesians 3:16-19.

A couple of days later, she sends a text with a picture attached:

"You're gonna love it here. Look, two big willow trees."

You know what? I just might.

May you come to realize the strength and expanse of God's Love, even when you can't see it. May the roots of your heart and soul break through asphalt and keep you grounded.

THIS MONTH'S
GRACE MOMENT

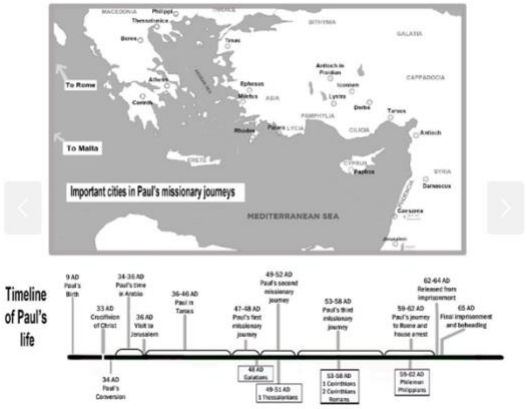
Sign up to host coffee hour on the easel in the Narthex.

Join Gather 4 Mission Group for a free presentation at Grace Lutheran Church on Thursday, 11/19 at 6:30 p.m. for Tom Paul Fox's theatrical show of "The Confessions of St. Paul". Carpooling will be offered. Sign up on the easel in the Narthex.

Material to be used to promote The Confessions of St. Paul.
For more information contact Tom Fox at 716 474-9524 or tompaulfox66@gmail.com



We will be hosting a brand new one-man theatrical show on Saint Paul, the most prolific missionary and theologian of the early Christian Church. This one act play – **The Confessions of St. Paul** – is based on what is known about his life and is faithful to the epistles or letters that are attributed to him. The one act show is written and performed by Tom Paul Fox, an award-winning playwright who has created and performed three one-man shows, including this one, his newest. Join us for this powerful and moving, portrayal of the man who first set out to destroy the followers of Jesus, to become one of Christianity's most fearless defenders.



From Marilyn Dorobiala:

This appeared in the Buffalo News:

<u>Be careful on Medicare Advantage Sign Ups</u>

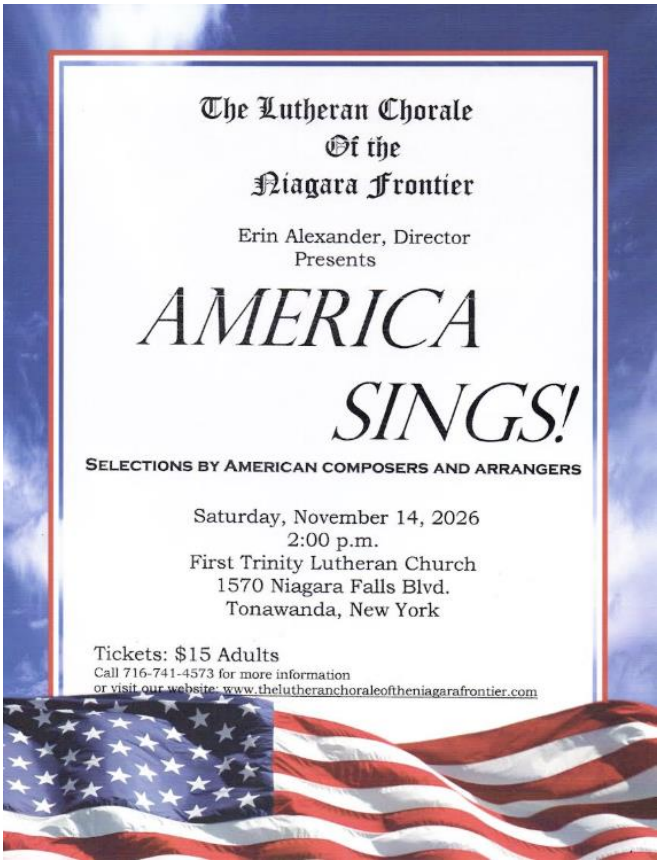
I am currently enrolled in a 2026 Medicare Advantage Plan that includes Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in its network. I don't have cancer, but my dermatologist is affiliated with Roswell Park. No one expects to get cancer, but one in three of us will have a cancer diagnosis in our lifetime. I received a 20-page Annual Notice of Change document from my current plan provider detailing benefit changes for vision, dental, pharmacy and more. Nowhere in the document does it tell me that, for 2027, Roswell Park is not in the network. If I do nothing by 12/7/2026, I am automatically enrolled in the same plan without Roswell Park coverage.

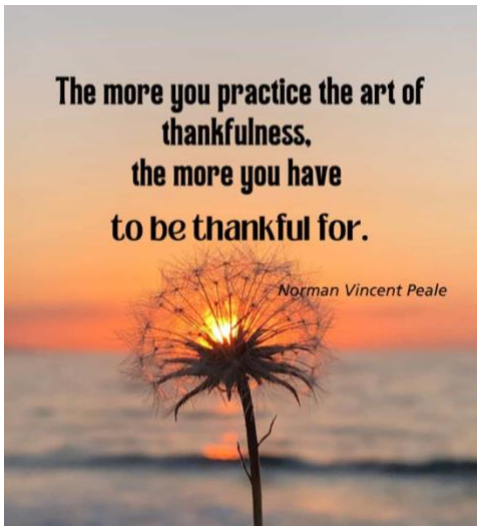
Do not assume Roswell Park coverage will in your 2027 Medicare Advantage Plan. It is up to you to choose a plan that includes your doctors, hospitals, prescription drugs and whether you want an HMO plan or a PPO plan.

Roswell Park is warning seniors that many 2027 Medicare Advantage Plans do not include Roswell Park in their HMO/PPO networks. Use the following Roswell Park link to see which insurance plans include Roswell Park for 2027: roswell-park.org/medicare. Then scroll down and click on + to the right of "2027 Individual Medicare Advantage Plan Coverage" to view the lists of which insurance plans include Roswell Park.

The federal website medicare.gov rates each Medicare Advantage Plan and you can call 1-800-MEDICARE (1-800-633-4227) with questions. The open enrollment period ends on 12/7/26.
Tom Graham
East Aurora

All are invited to join us for Lutheran Chorale's fall concert, "America Sings". In place of a Christmas offering, this year we present this concert in celebration of our country's 250th anniversary. Numerous pieces will be offered, with many of them by US composers and arrangers. Our concert will be Saturday, Nov. 14, 2PM, at First Trinity Lutheran Church, 1570 Niagara Falls Blvd, Tonawanda. Tickets ($15) are available from Jim Wasmund or at the door.





NEWSLETTER DEADLINE

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



Thank you to all who participated in Harvest House Annual Baby Shower and Friends of Night Jacket and Blanket collection. These collections will be so greatly appreciated by those in need.



All Saints will be collecting Christmas gifts for families from Family Promise this season. More information to follow soon.





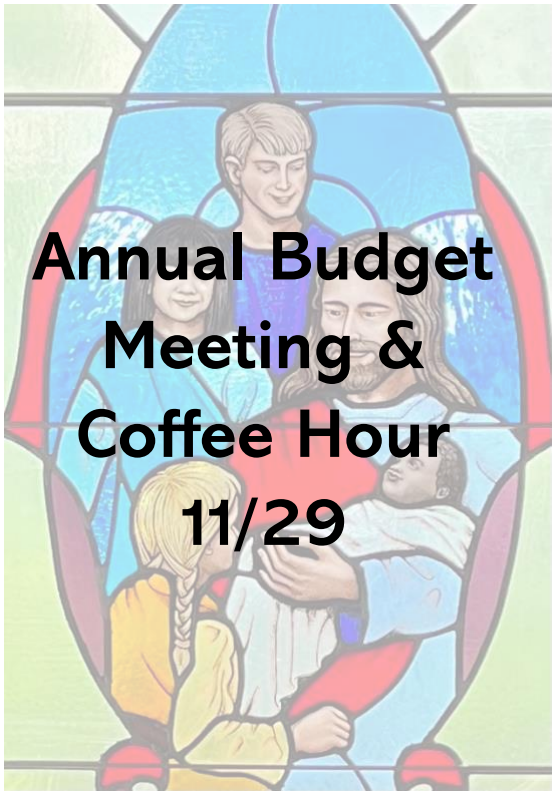
The holiday season is right around the corner, and Family Promise of WNY's Holiday Giving Tree is back! 🎁❄️✨

This special program connects generous community members with families we serve to help make their holiday wishes come true!

With more families to support than ever before, we're gearing up for what could be our biggest Holiday Giving Tree year yet! Whether you adopt a family or find another way to give, your generosity helps make the season brighter for children and families in our community!

Coming Home Counter:

Family Promise has helped 152 families find a home this year!



Please mark your calendar, and plan on attending our Annual Budget 2027 meeting. The budget has been carefully planned under the leadership of Chris Jancewicz, treasurer and input from your committee leaders. This budget is very important to witness and carry out our mission, as well as maintain everyday expenses and the upkeep of our property. Each of us has been given a covenant from God and an opportunity to respond to his promise. See you November 29th for the meeting and coffee hour.

Welcome Back Choir! Come to join in?

The choir has decided they prefer a Friday morning rehearsal over Wednesday night. So, you are considering joining but were held back by the evening rehearsals, please join for an hour of singing at 10:15 Friday mornings, beginning September 25. We'd love to have you with us!



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.

- † Brenda
- † Bennett
- † Norma
- † Sally
- † Louise
- † Mary L.
- † Family of Melvin Raab
- † Betty Hogan and Family
- † Family of Lois Stutzman





November Birthdays

John Massett	11/1
John Zier	11/8
Allison Graser	11/11
Kimberly Cline	11/18
Richard Pavlik	11/23
Martha Muck	11/24
Jill Kramer Steck	11/25
Mackenzie Parker	11/25
Zoe McLaughlin	11/26
Ricardo Lopez	11/27



November Anniversaries

Barbara & David Kurasch	11/10/1979
Ted & Linda Patricola	11/27/1965

LEAF RAKING PARTY
at All Saints –
SATURDAY 11/14
beginning at 9:00 a.m. Bring your rake or blower & kids!
Cider and donuts will be served.



Schedule of Volunteers
November 2026

	Nov. 1	Nov. 8	Nov. 15	Nov. 22	Nov. 29
Preaching	Rev. Marlene Hyden	Rev. Devie Ellis	Rev. Marlene Hyden	Rev. Mary Ellen Larson	Lynn Whitworth
Deacon	Beth Cheney	Ron Heintz	Barbara Kurasch	Martha Muck	Beth Cheney
Usher	Marc Schwartz & Volunteer				
Reader	Martha Muck	Sandi Menz	Jim Wasmund	Bev Blette	Joan Fabian
Altar Guild	Joanne Mauer	Joanne Mauer	Louise Peters	Louise Peters	B. Sullivan C. Sullivan
Cleaning	Joan Fabian	Beth Cheney	Beth Cheney	Martha Muck Joanne Mauer	Lori Gawlak
Counting	Bryan Sullivan & Ann Mayer				

FINANCE REPORT **Sep-26**

BANK BALANCES

Main Checking	$ 16,855.97
Special Funds Checking	$ 12,305.84
TOTAL	$ 29,161.81

MONTHLY ACTIVITY

	ACTUAL	1/12 BUDGET	DIFFERENCE
CURRENT RECEIPTS SPECIAL GIFTS	$ 9,649.00	$ 11,826.00	$ (2,177.00)
CURRENT EXPENDITURES	$ 13,807.71	$ 11,826.00	$ 1,981.71
DIFFERENCE	$ (4,158.71)	$ -	$ (4,158.71)

YEAR TO DATE

CURRENT RECEIPTS SPECIAL BUDGET GIFTS	$ 116,639.40	$106,434.00	$ 10,205.40
CURRENT EXPENDITURES	$ 117,947.26	$106,434.00	$ 11,513.26
DIFFERENCE	$ (1,307.86)	$ -	$ (1,307.86)

Our All Saints family has much to be thankful for as a congregation. As we look ahead to the Thanksgiving season, it is a perfect time to reflect on our accomplishments and continue to plan for the future.

The Special Gifts and Memorials Committee's mission is to support God's work through the joy of gift giving from members and non-members, who wish to provide a gift to All Saints or to provide a lasting memorial to a loved one.

If joining this committee would be of interest to you, we meet 1-2 times a year to discuss and make recommendations for the use of these donations where needed. Bev Zier, Chairperson

It's not too early to start thinking about the music presented at the start of All Saints' Christmas Eve service. Vocals, duets, instrumentals, or whatever else you would like to do all help to make this time a sacred period of preparation for the service. Please coordinate with Peter ahead of time.



SAVE THE DATE!

You are invited to Gather 4 Mission Children's Christmas Play on Sunday, December 6th at 1:30 p.m. at All Saints Lutheran Church at 6065 South Park Ave. Hamburg

Children from all four churches: All Saints, First Blasdell, Good Shepherd, Grace Lutheran are going to perform!

Christmas Cookies and Hot Chocolate will be served along with Christmas Carols.

We will be taking donations of hats, gloves and scarfs to hand out to the needy families in our community.

Please join us!



All Saints Lutheran Church
S 6065 South Park Avenue
Hamburg, NY 14075



November 2026