



DECEMBER 2025

SHINE: SHare. INspire. Engage.

Monthly Newsletter of
Our Saviour's Lutheran Church

May this season fill you with love

As we enter this Christmas season, I would like to express my gratitude to the Our Saviour's community. Your generosity during our stewardship season and your wholehearted response to the Season of Sharing reveal a community that is **alive with the Love of Christ**. You continue to show what happens when people believe God is still working in and through us. You say "yes" with your time, your resources, and your compassion, and it is changing lives.

The Christmas manger shows us what God loves to do. God gathers people close and then sends them into the world with a new sense of purpose. Shepherds arrive in wonder. Angels proclaim peace. Mary and Joseph carry hope. The manger draws people in, and then God sends them out carrying light, to make our world a little brighter. That is the pattern of our life together. **We gather around Christ**; His Love shapes us, and then we go out to love others in His name.

Every day, I see that movement in this church through people like you. I see it in your kindness, your courage, your generosity, and your deep desire to make Our Saviour's **a place where people know they belong**.

My prayer is that this Christmas season fills you with Hope, Peace, Joy, and a renewed sense of Love for what God is doing among us. May Christ gather you close in our Life Together, and may this community continue to shine with the Love that began in Bethlehem.

Merry Christmas and God's Peace,
Pr. Brian Wise

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OUR SAVIOUR'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known

Accessibility is a broad topic – When you think of accessibility for our congregation, what comes to mind?

Pastor Ben Sloss: The overall idea of accessibility and inclusion are at the heart of the Gospel because God uses our differences to show love, redemptive power and beauty to the world. At Our Saviour's, we don't think about accessibility because of laws or building codes, but because it is living out the Gospel in a tangible way. There are many examples in the Gospels, particularly when you think of the healing ministry of Jesus. Radical inclusion has been the legacy of the church from its inception; it is not a recent conceptual or political "add-on".

Ensuring **physical accessibility** is important at both campuses. We've modified bathrooms, changed flooring, and improved lighting. At the Our Saviour's campus, we are collaborating with Ray Graham staff to find grant funding for an elevator in the North wing. There is an existing elevator shaft, but adding an actual elevator would improve accessibility for our congregants as well as the outside groups that use that space. We don't have an actual estimate yet, but we anticipate this cost would be in the range of \$150,000-200,000. We are also evaluating automatic door openers for our accessible restrooms at both campuses.

Electronic accessibility is as important as physical access. Streaming/recording has become a regular part of our practice. Each week, as many people watch the streamed services as attend the 9:00 at OSLC or 10 at Celebration. We have an archive of all our streamed services on our YouTube channel. Streaming also allows us to add captions for any of our congregants with hearing issues. Streaming has also become more important for funeral or memorial services, and some families have reached out to us to record these services as both a keepsake for the family and to allow individuals who cannot directly attend the service to participate remotely.

When hearing is a concern, the OSLC campus has an assisted hearing device in the rear of the sanctuary. The sanctuary floor is also embedded with a Tele-coil. The T-coil can be linked with a person's hearing aid so that high-quality sound is directly transmitted to the hearing aid. Also, our website was redesigned in October. Much of the layout is similar, but the site has enhanced search capabilities. All adaptive tech (e.g., screen readers for low-vision folks) is now compatible with the new layout.

Emotional and social accessibility are not discussed as much as physical and electronic accessibility – but they are at the heart of "being church." Our theme of "Life Together" this year is intentional. Our ability to "see" each other and practice being in community is central to our identity as Christians and to doing God's work of healing and justice. These efforts fall into two broad categories – **community and support within our congregations** as evidenced by our many ministries and small groups and **community and support outside of our congregation** through mission work and community engagement. Our participation weaves together the members of our congregation inside the church — and links us to the community and the world as well. This is the work of the church — to see the world (and each other) in an open-hearted and compassionate way.

Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known

Property Committee Update

We will now be providing regular updates on Property Committee activities, plans, and projects through SHINE. We appreciate your continued support! It enables us to maintain and improve Our Saviour's buildings, grounds, interiors, HVAC systems, and equipment. We are pleased to welcome Todd Freitag back to the team. With Greg Nasman, Todd Freitag and Greg Norgaard, we benefit from their expertise of current and former facility managers.

Recent Projects and Plans:

- The 2nd phase of the HVAC replacement at Celebration serving the Children's Center is complete.

- The LED conversion is proceeding at both campuses. Nearly 90% of the fixtures at the OSL campus are done except for the Sanctuary, Narthex, and Fellowship Hall ceiling fixtures, which have cost and technology issues. At Celebration, about 30-40% of fixtures are converted, focused on the gym, the lobby, and parking lot.
- Plans have been approved to repair and refresh the Memorial Garden wall at Celebration. Also, the Memorial brick path has been refreshed.
- We will have a concrete walk installed next spring from the SE corner emergency exit door of the Church Sanctuary to the existing sidewalk.

Watch for more news and updates from the Property Committee in future SHINE updates.

Do It Yourself (DIY) Team a Blessing For Our Campuses

If you're at either campus during the week, you'll run across members of the DIY team. This informal team helps the church with facility maintenance projects and have literally saved us thousands of dollars/year for decades.

There are about 12 people involved. Besides helping the church maintain functionality and look presentable and welcoming, the work of the DIY team helps us meet budget goals by completing projects that would be contracted out. Very complex projects do still have to be contracted, but the DIY team can complete many of our needs.

An additional benefit of being part of the DIY team is the camaraderie built among members. Lee Thomsen notes there are members of the team that he would otherwise not have come to know. There's a real sense of ownership and accomplishment created by working together in service for our broader congregation.

If you have skills (or even can be an extra pair of hands) call Greg Nasman at 630-281-4219 or Lee at 630-853-2587 for more information.



Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known

In Focus: Getting to Know Brittany Sheldon

Brittany Sheldon, OSLC's director of children, youth and family ministries (CYFM), was new to Our Saviour's when she joined the church staff in August. But there was a familiarity in her first visit to the Our Saviour's Campus this summer that brought tears to her eyes.

"My mom worked at Edward Hospital when I was a kid," she says. "The first Sunday I came here for worship, I parked in the south parking lot by the hospital, and I sat in the parking lot and just found myself crying. I called my mom and she said, 'Sounds like home to me!' And the rest is history."



What felt like a homecoming of sorts for Brittany started earlier this year with some significant professional and personal changes. After 10 years as an elementary school educator, teaching in dual-language classrooms in Aurora and Plano, she was looking to move on from teaching. In addition, the church she had been attending in Aurora closed, and her boyfriend moved farther east, to Downers Grove.

"It was like, OK, well, now I have to go church shopping," she says. A search on the ELCA's website for congregations somewhere between Aurora and Downers Grove pointed her to Our Saviour's, and in checking out Our Saviour's website, she saw the job posting for the CYFM director position. "I thought, 'I can take a hint,'" says Brittany. "I applied that day, and then a couple of days later I got a call for my first interview, and then I came for a visit, and I was just floored."

A graduate of Northern Illinois University, where she majored in elementary education and Spanish business translation, Brittany credits a strong faith community at Salem Lutheran in Sycamore during her junior high and high school years with inspiring her to get involved with ministry.

"I had a wonderful youth minister who still serves in the area—she's now a pastor—and she was vital to my growth," Brittany says. "Our church was located directly across from the high school, and she made a point to have student lunches with us where she would come to the school and we would get to go to lunch with her. It was the greatest thing. Just having a low-key, no-pressure space where we could share anything we wanted was so valuable. It wasn't necessarily faith-related, but just about building relationships, and that was crucial for me." (continued on p. 5)

Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known

In Focus: Getting to Know Brittany Sheldon

(continued from p. 4) That formative experience led Brittany to get involved in campus ministries at NIU. During her sophomore year, her best friend and classmate, Ryanne, who was studying to be a psychologist, encouraged her to go on a school-building mission trip to Guatemala. “She had a countdown for me (for Guatemala),” Brittany recalls. “She was crucial for me in going.”

On Feb. 14, 2008, Ryanne was one of five students killed when a gunman opened fire in a lecture hall on the NIU campus in DeKalb. It was a devastating loss for Brittany, and one that lent heartbreaking new significance to her work in Guatemala.

“Our first trip was a month after the shooting, so I had just lost her and I was still grieving her,” Brittany says. “The school (we were working on) was called School of the Saints, so building this school of the saints, thinking about her—it meant everything to me. It gave me even more purpose.”

Brittany wound up going on two more mission trips to Guatemala, both during challenging seasons of life. Her second trip began as her grandmother was in her final days of life. “She called me hours before I was supposed to leave—I had packed and unpacked my bags three times,” says Brittany. “She had woken up and said she needed to talk to me. She said, ‘Love you, go.’ And so I went.”

During these difficult seasons, Brittany says, strong communities and friends in faith lent both support and hope. “I don’t think I would have been able to hold onto my faith without people surrounding me, encouraging me, and reminding me whose I was and who I am,” she says. “There were so many times where life just hit me, and that community was like, ‘No, it’s going to be OK; we’re going to walk with you through this.’”

It’s that kind of community that Brittany wants to foster for children, youths and families at Our Saviour’s. “I want to give the experience that I had, to be so surrounded,” says Brittany. “Life can take us so many different ways, and I want that community to be so strong, it carries people. The fact that I get to be here now is a huge, major gift.”

If you’d like to get involved in children, youth & family ministries as a mentor, a Sunday School teacher or a volunteer in another capacity, contact Brittany at brittanyseldon@oursaviours.com.

Thriving with OSLC: Financial Wellness

As we enter December, a month filled with celebration, expectation, and sometimes quiet strain, many of us feel the pull between joy and exhaustion. In these moments, our spirituality becomes an anchor, helping us return to what truly grounds us.

Spiritual wellness refers to a state of well-being that encompasses one's beliefs, values, and sense of purpose. It involves finding meaning and connection to something greater than oneself, whether that "greater" is God, nature, community, or the deepest convictions that guide one's life. For Christians, this often looks like seeking God's presence in daily moments, trusting that the Spirit is continually nurturing and guiding our paths.

In Galatians 5, Paul describes the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These aren't qualities we force or shame ourselves into. They are the fruit that grows naturally when we stay connected to God, much like branches drawing nourishment from the vine.

Spiritual wellness is less about perfection and more about the purest form of connection with our God, our community, and our guiding principles.

During this busy season, we can nurture this pure connection through small, sustainable practices:

- **Love** in how we listen and respond to those around us.
- **Joy** found in simple, ordinary moments that make us smile.
- **Peace** created by pausing before reacting to help us respond with wisdom.
- **Patience** when plans shift, delays happen, or emotions run higher.
- **Kindness** offered even when we feel stretched thin.
- **Generosity** in sharing time, compassion, or attention with our loved ones.
- **Faithfulness** in showing up honestly rather than perfectly.
- **Gentleness** with others—and with ourselves.
- **Self-control** in choosing activities that bring us energy rather than drains us.



Alexandra Colaianni, OSLC wellness manager.

(continued on p. 7)

Thriving with OSLC: Financial Wellness

(continued from p. 6)

As we move through Advent, may we remember that the Spirit is already at work, strengthening what is weary, softening what is tense, and nurturing what is good.

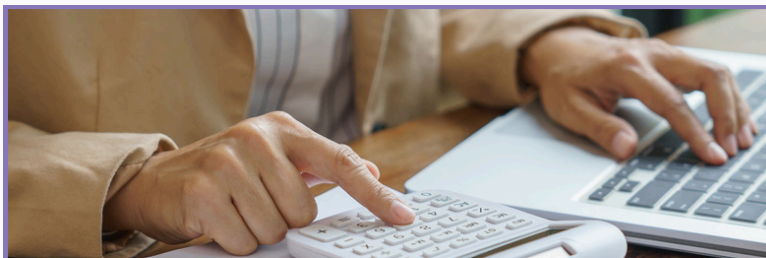
Resources to help strengthen your Spiritual Wellness:

1. **Pray As You Go** (Daily Audio Meditation): A short (10-12 min) daily guided prayer produced by Jesuits. Great for commuting, walking, and creating moments of stillness. <https://prayasyougo.org/>
2. **The Bible Project** (Videos, Reading Plans, Classes): Beautiful, accessible videos explaining Scripture, themes, and spiritual practices. Great for deepening biblical understanding without feeling overwhelmed. <https://bibleproject.com/>
3. **Virtual Sit Meditations for Advent** (Center for Action & Contemplation): Free guided meditations inspired by Fr. Richard Rohr's book "Preparing for Christmas." <https://cac.org/event/virtual-sit-meditations-for-advent-2025/>
4. **A Stable Lamp is Lighted** (ECLA World Hunger): Advent Calendar, Study Guide, and Action Guide <https://www.gcsynod.org/news/a-stable-lamp-is-lighted-advent-2025-resources-from-elca-world-hunger>

A Prayer for December:

Holy Spirit, root us in Your love this season. Grow in us the fruit that brings healing, hope, and connection. Help us release what steals our peace and receive the gifts You are offering. Guide our days, shape our hearts, and lead us toward deeper wholeness. Amen.

Congregational wellness manager Alexandra Colaianni is a licensed clinical social worker and the founder of Modern Balance Integrative Therapy in Naperville. At OSLC, she leads special programs around mental, physical and community wellness.



In Photos: A Connection-Filled Season



Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known

OSLC Library Corner



Grateful for Our Saviour's Library as we enter the Advent season

Special observances in December include Advent, Christmas, and World AIDS Day, along with national recognitions such as Universal Human Rights Month and Safe Toys and Gifts Month.

Explore books and resources on faith, history, culture, and seasonal themes in Our Saviour's Library. You'll also find materials to support end-of-year reflection and celebration.

Looking for a specific title? Search the library's digital card catalog at 17036.rmwebopac.com/.

Dec. Celebrations

Birthdays (80+)

Mario Candia
Diana Duda
Margie Ehlert
Catherine Giacomozzi
Pam Gutshall
Phyllis Johnson
Linda Loukota
Marvin Rathjen
Sharon Swanson
Karen Tutton
Lora-Lee Wike
Walter Woods

Anniversaries (40+)

Melanie Farnon
Jim & Barbara Hiner
Morton & Christine Hyatt
Patricia Jech
Lu Koerper
Thomas & Joann Kudelka
Steven & Laura Link
Beth & Scott Maeder
Pat Nicholls
Don & Shirley Peters
Marvin & Beverly Rathjen
Marty & Nancy Rench
Wilma Roose
Barbara Rutherford
Arnold Seaberg
Joyce Shredl
Erin & Michael Smith
John & Phyllis Van Beek
Logan & Joan Wasson
Donald Whelpley
Lora-Lee Wike
Karen Wills
Colleen Zukauskas

Baptisms

Charlotte Elizabeth Harmon (11-30-25)

Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known

Welcome, New Members!



BJ Rahn and Ron Krause are longtime residents of Naperville who have attended services and various church activities throughout the area. But it seemed as them that every time they attended something at Our Saviour's, they felt at home.

"There's no denying the welcoming atmosphere, the genuine caring for the community, the emphasis on the gospel, where love, forgiveness, and acceptance are at the forefront," they wrote. "After attending weekly services regularly for the past months, we have decided that Our Saviour's is the congregation we wish to be an active part of, to celebrate with, and worship with. We are blessed and enjoy our blended family of 6 children and 5 grandsons, with one more grandson due in March.

BJ is an avid reader and yoga instructor here in Naperville. Ron is an amateur photographer who enjoys music across genres.

"We suffer from Wanderlust and travel as much as we're able, enjoy attending live theater together, and cheer on our beloved Bears, year in and year out."

Good Samaritan Fund: Here to Help for Sudden Needs

The Good Samaritan Fund provides short-term, emergency financial assistance to individuals and families within our community who are facing unexpected financial hardship. Whether someone is dealing with a sudden medical expense, temporary loss of income, housing instability, or another urgent need, the fund offers compassionate support to help them navigate difficult moments or regain stability.

The designated funds are made by pastoral staff for confidentiality purposes.

Thanks to all those who have contributed to this important fund. In 2025 Our Saviour's distributed over \$6,000 to approximately 20 families throughout the year. If you would like to donate you may do so by going to <https://onrealm.org/oslc/-/form/give/now>.

Caring for Creation

The Caring for Creation group has recycling on their mind this holiday season. As you start pulling out your Christmas decorations and testing your twinkling lights, be sure to **think green**.

If you have any Christmas lights that have burned out or strings that you don't want any more, don't throw them out. Bring them to either campus and recycle them. Until January, there will be large bins labeled **"Recycled Christmas Lights"** where you can put those lights you no longer want. Any type of string light is ok — LEDs, mini-lights, fairy lights, and rope lights. Be sure to leave us with just the string lights — make sure there are not any decorations, garland, plastic ties or other wrapping aides included. Our team will box everything up and bring them to SCARCE in Addison where they will be deconstructed and recycled as much as possible.

At both campuses, you'll find two **Caring for Creation Christmas trees**. They have been decorated with reused, recycled, or recyclable items — some of which we showcased at our October Greener Christmas event.

Underneath the tree are sustainably wrapped gifts that you are welcome to take home! We hope you'll get some ideas from our trees and incorporate them into your holiday decorations at home this year.



To start the new year, we're adding more recycling — a year-round version of some of the items we collect at the garage sale. At each campus, you'll find a recycling station with containers for the following items:

- **Pop Tabs** – We'll take our collected pop tabs to the Ronald McDonald House room at Edward Hospital. Every tab collected helps families stay close to their sick or injured children.
- **Bread Tags (no twist ties or cardboard)** – We'll take our collected plastic bread tags to SCARCE where they partner with Danielle Cares for Chairs.
- **Keys**
- **Used Crayons** – SCARCE has a Super Crayon Project which diverts crayons from going to the landfill. After removing whole crayons that can be reused, broken crayon pieces are recycled into "Super Crayons."
- **Eye Glasses** – These glasses will make their way to Lions Club. Recycled eyeglasses are given to people in need throughout the world with the help of various medical missionaries.
- **Inkjet Cartridges** (no toner)

Knowing Jesus, Making Jesus Known

Dear Church,

This year, we've seen what *Life Together* really looks like. It's been families standing with our neighbors as we have seen your donations flow in for Loaves&Fishes and other mission partners. It's kids running up for children's sermons, knowing this is their church. It's a full house at Trivia Night where laughter, generosity, and faith came together in one joyful evening around this year's stewardship conversations. It's people saying "I'm home" when we have these connections in our lives together as a congregation committed to worshipping, praying, eating, and being generous together.

Your giving makes all of it possible: the worship that grounds us, the care that sustains us, the mission that stretches us beyond these walls. God is doing something remarkable here, and we get to be part of it. As we prepare for 2026, I'm asking you to take one more step of faith. Pray about increasing your commitment this year to Our Saviour's and the mission we share. Not out of obligation, but out of gratitude for what God is already doing among us and excitement for what comes next. You can make your pledge for 2026 by replying to this email or visiting: <https://onrealm.org/oslc/-/form/pledge/generaloperating2026>

Let's continue to show what *Life Together* looks like when God's people give with glad and generous hearts.

God's Peace,
Pastor Brian Wise

Save the Date for Special Happenings:

A rectangular graphic with a dark blue background featuring a bokeh effect of light spots. The text is centered and written in a white, elegant serif font.

Longest Night service
Dec. 20, 5 p.m.
Sanctuary

Christmas Eve Worship:

Our Saviour's Campus:

4:30 p.m. (family-oriented nativity story);
8 and 11 p.m. (traditional with lessons,
carols, and candlelight)

Celebration Campus:

2:30 p.m. (family-oriented nativity story,
contemporary worship band)

A rectangular graphic with a teal background featuring a bokeh effect of light spots. The text is centered and written in a white, elegant serif font.

Renewed by Grace

A NEW YEAR'S WELLNESS EVENT
3-5 P.M. WEDNESDAY, DEC. 31
OUR SAVIOUR'S CAMPUS
RSVP BY DEC. 21 TO ALEXANDRA
COLAIANNI