



Tidings of Peace

January 2024

Volume XXV Number 1

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church ♦ 1747 W. Milham Avenue, Portage, MI 49024 ♦ 269-343-3453 ♦ popportage.org

"Touched by
the Gospel,
we seek to be
instruments of
God's Peace,
for the sake
of the world."

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Pastor's Page

A Blessing for Strangers

By Meta Herrick Carlson

It's a shame that we taught a whole generation to believe strangers are dangerous – primarily, automatically – to whisper about people who might have words for themselves, to mistrust potential helpers. We are only strange when we leave each other unknown, swallowing childlike curiosity about other human beings, resisting that delicious moment of connection revealed.

There once was a congregation that had no children. This made the members sad, so they tried preparing a weekly Sunday school to encourage families with children to come. They faithfully planned lessons and activities and gave of their time to show up on Sunday mornings to teach. Most importantly, they decided to pray for the children they had faith God would send them. They agreed that any time they prepared a lesson and there were no children to teach, they would spend that time in prayer for the future children and their families.

The first week came and went. There were no children, so they prayed. The second week, and the third, a month, three months... no children arrived for Sunday school, but every week the community prepared and prayed anyway. This went on for an entire year. In the second year, a few children came, and then a few more, and five years later the Sunday school and the congregation were full of children and families!

This is a true story about a real congregation. I share it with you because many of you have asked me where all of the children are in our community and the truth is, we have quite a few families with children who are involved in our congregation. But life has been changing in recent years and regular participation in a community of faith don't mean weekly attendance at multiple activities anymore. If you're not involved with Sunday school or a youth group activity, you might not have the opportunity to see our children and youth very often. Families worship from home when a member isn't feeling well or watch the livestream later when a sports or dance schedule interferes with in person attendance. They're still connected, though, even when we can't see them in worship.

So - how can we grow in connection with our current families and reach out to share the love of Jesus with new families? We start by getting more intentional about prayer. We pray for our current children and youth and the ones we trust God will send us. Any of us can do this from anywhere – however you already pray, you can also pray about this.

We can also get more intentional about praying *with* our current children and youth and their families. We can become more than strangers to each other by getting to know one another and praying for each other's joys and concerns. Em and I have worked on a new prayer partner program for this year, and I hope you'll consider participating when you're invited to pray with a child in our congregation. It may feel like "one more thing" to do at first, but I invite you to look closer. Think of it as an opportunity for connection and relationship. It's a way to help a child or youth know that they are loved and belong in God's family. It may even be a way to have your own faith renewed by the faith of our young people – who are kind, thoughtful, amazing folks!

Shalom,

Pastor Rachel

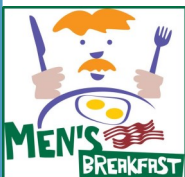


What's Happening at POP!

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Meets **Friday, January 5 at 10 AM** in the Social Hall.

If you or someone you know would like a shawl, or for more information about becoming a prayer shawl creator, please contact Dianne Hellman, 323-9392.



Men's Breakfast!

8:00 AM, Wednesday, January 10

Michelle's on Romence Rd. in Portage. Join Pastor Rachel for breakfast, prayer, and conversation. Tell them you're with Prince of Peace. We've got the back room reserved.

Bunko

Join us **Tuesday, January 9 at 1 PM**
Where: POP Gathering Space



Quilters

Tuesdays, January 16 at 9:30 AM

Where: POP Social Hall

Not sure you can sew well enough to participate? Don't worry! Many of our quilters learned their skills from others in the group because they wanted to contribute to this ministry that provides warmth, security, and shelter to people around the world. They're happy to teach you, too. Contact Sheryl for more information: 267-6274.



BREAD AND BREAKFAST

SATURDAY, January 6

Bread construction will begin at 7:00 a.m. and breakfast will be served at about 9:00 a.m. Come and bake bread, or just come for the breakfast and conversation...it's all good!

For more information, or to be included on the mailing list, talk with Wade Lawrence at church, email him at

wade.b.lawrence@gmail.com,
or call him at (269) 353-9885.

We hope to see you there!

WOMEN'S SMALL GROUP

Meeting Monday, **January 8 & 22**, 7:15 pm via Zoom

We'll begin our discussion on

"Refugia Faith--Seeking Hidden Shelters,
Ordinary Wonders and the Healing of the Earth"
by Debra Rienstra published by Fortress Press

Would love to have you join us!!

We read, discuss, journey and grow together
in our faith lives

and in the world around us!! Contact
dmsnyder1149@gmail.com for more details and the link!!

Ladies Lunch Bunch meets the third Tuesday of the month

Meet at 11:45am on **January 16** at the Chinn, Chinn,
52885 N Main St, Mattawan

Questions? Car pool? Need a ride?

Contact Dianne Hellman, 323-9392.

Emergency Numbers

Emergency Contact Information

During last fall's Elder Care education series, we learned how important it is to have emergency contact information available in times of crisis. We thought it would be helpful if the church office kept this information on hand for a couple of reasons:

1. If you have an emergency at a POP event and we need to let someone know what has happened.
2. If we have a concern and can't reach you via any of the contact information we have for you.

To share your emergency contact information with us, please complete this Google Form or get a paper form from the church office: <https://forms.gle/xbKqzoSZNNL6R8v78>

The information will be stored securely in our database and will only be accessible to church staff.

Prince of Peace Book Club

The POP Book Club will meet **Wednesday January 17** at 10:00am in the "coffee room".

The book we will be discussing is "The Book of Lost Names" by Kristin Harmel about the brave people who helped Jewish children flee from the Nazis. Looking ahead to February, we will discuss "Hand the Moon" by Jeanette Walls.



Beat the winter blues with another POP Trivia Night!



Join us on **January 26** as Wade Lawrence will once again be our trivia master for a night of team trivia fun. Everyone had a great time last August, so don't miss this chance to show off your trivia skills! Watch for more information!

Updated Contact Information

Kay Kincaid new phone number
(269) 578-2373 cell

A Year In Pictures

POP's Year in Pictures

We've had such fun as a community of faith this year! We hope you enjoy looking at many of the ways God has been with us in worship, service, learning, and fellowship in these pictures. For more detailed stories about these events and more, join us for the annual meeting after worship on January 28!

**BEING A
PASTOR
IS EASY**
It's like riding a bike.
Except the bike is on fire.
You're on fire.
Everything is on fire.



Honored by the city of Portage for being a polling place since 2013



We serve our community by our food distribution and free store.



Justice & Diversity provides learning and leading by showing up for Pride Week.



A potato shaped like Michigan!

The Jubilee Garden harvests food for Mothers of Hope and Loaves & Fishes.





"God's Work, Our Hands"



God's Work, Our Hands Day!

Making health kits, knitting caps, packing school kits and sooo many quilts.

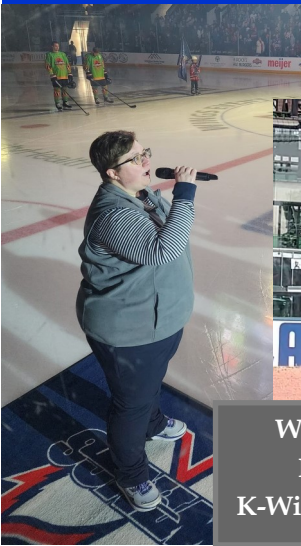
Picture Below: Project Connect Freestore

Pictures Left: Shop and Wrap or Not

The youth shopped for their adopted family and then wrapped all the gifts. They were able to buy gifts for their family and our refugee family, because you were so generous at the silent auction.



A Year of Fellowship



We listen to Pastor sing the National Anthem at the K-Wings and the Growlers games!



We eat and we know things!

We celebrated our graduates with a picnic.

We tested our minds with a trivia night for Good Sam.



The Gate Keeper!



Trunk or Treat

A couple of the many creative trunks.

The Society for Creative Anachronism visited!



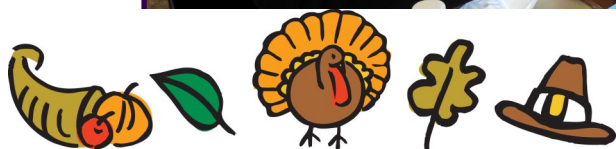


We get creative with food.

We had our first ever cookie decorating
class led by Karen Diring.
Proceeds went the Good Sam fund.
We decorated gingerbread houses with
Wade & Kim Lawrence.



The Prince of Peace Book Club.



SO MANY BLESSINGS



Dumbfounded by the dumbwaiter!



We celebrated the holidays with our Annual Christmas party held at the Eldridge's lovely home.

The Family Christmas celebration saw the arrival of Santa and Mrs. Claus and our favorite elf. A new chili-cook off winner was crowned! (*aproned?*) Recipe on request.

General merriment was had and we broke our paper chain record! (116 feet)



A Year in the Life of Our Youth



We learned about ...

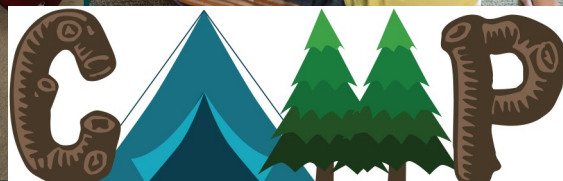
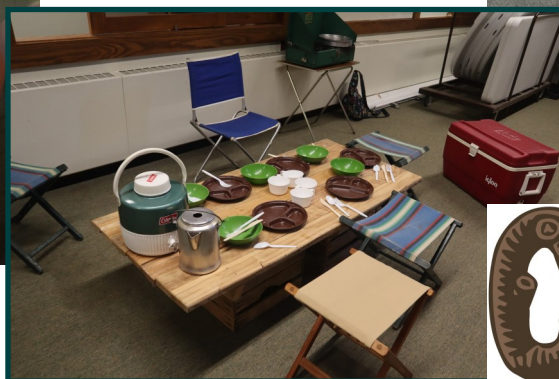
Communion,

Confirmation,

And S'more about Jesus.

We were so excited to return to VBS and to continue faith formation and Youth Group!

We're looking forward to next year and lots of growth.



Graduates 2023



Ava Erdmann



Hannah Williams



Kendall Hannemann



Christian Maurer



Living Waters Camp



An offering from our resident cartoonist: Verity Poisson

Bees and Honey



We had our first honey harvest in 2023.

We added another hive to our Jubilee Garden Apiary.

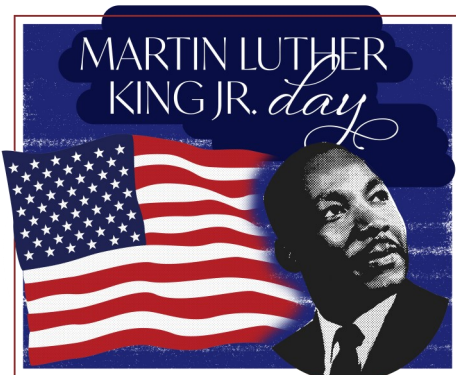


This and That

Dear POP friends,

Thank you so much for the outpouring of love and sharing for the Angel Tree. You gave generously to two YWCA, five Portage Community Center, and a large refugee family. Their lives will be changed by the support you provided. Thank you so much for participating in this Christmas event!

Blessings, Lynne Wathen



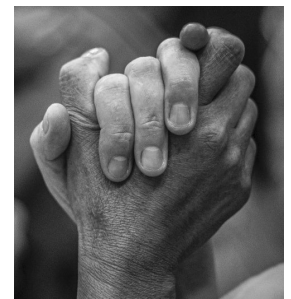
The office will be closed on Monday, January 15 in observance of Martin Luther King Day.

Prayer Team Invitation

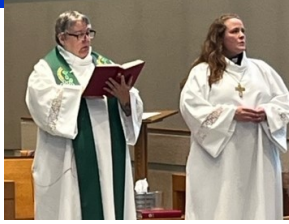
They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42

From the earliest days of the Church, God's people have come together to pray. Jesus promises that where two or three are gathered, he is there with us. This year we will be revitalizing our prayer life as a congregation through the new prayer partner program with the youth of our congregation and through the renewal of our Prayer Team Ministry. Led by Jan Ellwitz, the team will receive weekly prayer updates via e-mail and will commit to spending some time in prayer each week for the concerns that are lifted up in our community. If team members are interested, we will also plan times to come together in person or via Zoom for intentional prayer.

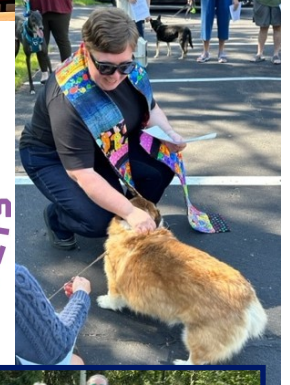
To join the prayer team, simply e-mail prayer@popportage.org to connect with Jan and request to be added to the e-mail list.



Celebrations and Worship



We said farewell to Megan, as she began her internship and farewell to Scottie, as our Worship Team Director.



We celebrated the Risen Christ, new acolytes and we blessed pets.



Our tech crew kept us on track and on-line.



We prepared for Advent

Charter Members, New Members and Visitors



We celebrated charter members . .

Ellen Bradley, Nancy Mason and
Carolyn Selby



Karen Adams

New members in 2023!

Karen Maney



Elaine Sievers



Anne Breneman



David and Susan Brown



Non-Human
Visitors

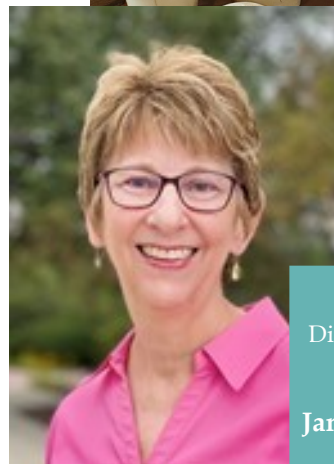


Human Visitors



Sharon Mondragon, author of
The Unlikely Yard of the Dragon Lady

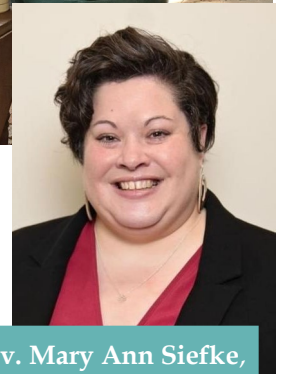
Cindy Krill, artist



Rev. Mary Ann Siefke,

Director of Congregational Engagement
& Advancement at Trinity Seminary

Janene Ternes, Retreat Leader





Budget Hearings

January 14 at 11:45 a.m. in the Sanctuary

January 21 at 9:15 a.m. in the Social Hall

Join us to learn the proposed budget for 2024.

A Zoom link will be available.



All-Church Meeting

Annual Meeting

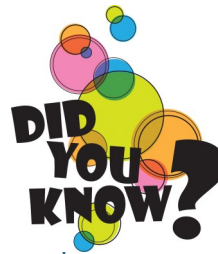
Join us on **January 28** at noon for our annual meeting. You will be able to join by Zoom. A Zoom link will be available.

We will have an enhanced fellowship hour.

Impact Giving

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY TO OTHERS

- *We are grateful for your generous gift to **Ministry with Community**. Thank you for making a difference in the lives of those we serve. With gratitude for all we accomplish together.*
– Kelly Henderson, Executive Director
- *Thank you for your recent donation of 118 pounds of food to **Kalamazoo Loaves and Fishes**. Imagine the possibilities when our neighbors have the nourishment necessary to reach their potential rather than struggling day after day for the source of their next meal. Your support may the work of Kalamazoo, Loaves and Fishes possible.*
– Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director
- *HRI gratefully acknowledges your generous donation. We could not do this work without you!*
– Michelle Davis, Executive Director
- *Thank you for supporting the work that allows **YWCA Kalamazoo** to meet the many needs of those in our community who are facing adversity and crisis. We greatly appreciate your generous donation to support our Domestic Assault Program through *Evolving the Story*.*
– Lisa Rodriguez, Interim Chief Executive Officer



Did you know?

In the first 11 months of this year you have turned in 4,580 cans and bottles. The money we receive for returning the cans and bottles goes in to the youth mission trip fund.

So, thank you for bringing those cans and bottles in and please keep them coming!

On-Line Giving

On-line Giving Has Never Been So Easy!



You can click or copy and paste the link

<https://tithe.ly/give?c=2250097>

or use the QR code.

You can also go to the Prince of Peace website & click on the giving button.

For questions contact either Marilyn or Tamara.

Birthdays and Anniversaries

1/1	Thomas Noall Mary Holtapp Renee Lassila	1/11	Jordan Kana'an Ann Lindahl	1/20	Ava Erdmann Stephanie Somers Gretchen Kauth	1/26	Linda Timm
1/2	Eli Thomssen	1/13	Joan Ford	1/21	Dylan Sweeney	1/27	Donna Pennington Diana Reames
1/5	Jennifer Jawahir Marilyn Storch	1/14	Christine Thommen	1/22	Michelle Nitz Karsten Cooper	1/29	Dennis Stalker Fran Bushfield
1/6	Kyan French	1/15	Melissa Ottesen	1/22	Lynda Bauckham Barbara Ziegler	1/30	Sara Krebill Dale Clem
1/7	Kai Jensen Calleigh Bolde	1/16	Charles Ford Claudia Blahnik	1/24	Linda Isakson Caelyn French	1/31	Sara Lassila
1/10	Marilyn Lund Karen Helmeke Eric Diring	1/17	Gabriel Maurer Tammy Olsen	1/25	Holly Lago Stella Lindmark-Stepanski		
		1/18	Sandy Foster				

Anniversaries

Kevin & Staci Esch	January 3
Randy & Marilyn Lund	January 22
Michael & Joanne Preston	January 28



Prince of Peace Calendar — January

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31 10:30am Worship 11:45am Fellowship Time 2:00pm SCA-3 Hills	1 New Year's Day Office Closed 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group	2 9:00am ESL 9:15am Staff Meeting 5:30pm Great Lakes Adventure Club - Social Hall/Flex 7:00pm Bells	3 10:00am Literacy Tutoring - Room 7 10:00am WMU Center for Disabilities 11:00am Pastor's Bible Study - Zoom 5:00pm Girl Scout Troop - 80327	4 9:00am ESL 1:00pm Food Distribution 1:00pm Free Store 6:30pm South County Fiber Arts 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	5 10:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry - Social Hall 6:00pm K-Wings Game	6 Epiphany 9:00am Bread & Breakfast
7 9:15am Faith Formation 9:15am Prayer Partner Kick-off 10:30am Worship 11:45am Fellowship Time 2:00pm SCA-3 Hills	8 10:00am Literacy Tutoring - Room 7 10:30am Literacy Tutoring - Library 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group 5:30pm Finance Committee mtg. - Zoom 6:00pm Social Concerns Meeting - Zoom 7:00pm Women's Small Group - Zoom	9 9:00am ESL 9:15am Staff Meeting 1:00pm Senior Buniko - Gathering Space 6:00pm Christian Ed & Youth Committee - Zoom 7:00pm Bells	10 8:00am Men's Breakfast @ Michelle's 10:00am Literacy Tutoring - Room 7 10:00am WMU Center for Disabilities 11:00am Pastor's Bible Study - Zoom 7:00pm Church Council meeting - Zoom	11 9:00am ESL 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	12 10:00am ESL Open Tutoring	13
14 9:15am Faith Formation 10:30am Worship 11:45am Budget Hearing 11:45am Fellowship Time	15 Martin L. King, Jr. Day Office Closed in Observance of MLK Day 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group 6:00pm Master Gardeners - Sanctuary	16 9:00am ESL 9:30am Quilters - Social Hall 11:45am Ladies Lunch Bunch @ 7:00pm Bells	17 10:00am Book Club - Gathering Space 10:00am Literacy Tutoring - Room 7 10:00am WMU Center for Disabilities 11:00am Library Committee - Library 11:00am Pastor's Bible Study - Zoom 5:00pm Girl Scout Troop - 80327	18 Newsletter Deadline 9:00am ESL 1:00pm Food Distribution 6:00pm Hope for Creation 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	19 10:00am ESL Open Tutoring	20
21 9:15am Budget Hearing 9:15am Faith Formation 10:30am Worship 11:45am Fellowship Time 12:15pm Middle and High School Youth Group 2:00pm SCA-3 Hills	22 9:30am Ruth Circle 10:00am Literacy Tutoring - Room 7 10:30am Literacy Tutoring - Library 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group 5:30pm Fellowship Committee Meeting - Hybrid Meeting - Youth Room 6:00pm Justice and Diversity Meeting - room 7 7:00pm Women's Small Group - Zoom 7:00pm Worship Committee Meeting - Zoom	23 Open Doors Men's Shelter Meal 9:00am ESL 9:15am Staff Meeting 7:00pm Bells	24 10:00am Literacy Tutoring - Room 7 10:00am WMU Center for Disabilities 11:00am Pastor's Bible Study - Zoom	25 9:00am ESL 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	26 10:00am ESL Open Tutoring 6:00pm Trivia Night	27
28 9:15am Faith Formation 10:30am Worship 11:45am Fellowship Time 12:00pm Annual Meeting 2:00pm SCA-3 Hills	29 10:00am Literacy Tutoring - Room 7 10:30am Literacy Tutoring - Library 2:00pm Keith Gelman Trumpet Studio - Music room 4:00pm Care Team Meeting 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group	30 9:00am ESL 9:15am Staff Meeting 2:00pm Keith Gelman Trumpet Studio - Music room 7:00pm Bells	31 10:00am Literacy Tutoring - Room 7 10:00am WMU Center for Disabilities 11:00am Pastor's Bible Study - Zoom 2:00pm Keith Gelman Trumpet Studio - Music room 5:00pm Girl Scout Troop - 80327	1 9:00am ESL 1:00pm Food Distribution 1:00pm Free Store 6:30pm South County Fiber Arts 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	2 Groundhog Day 10:00am ESL Open Tutoring 10:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry - Social Hall 2:00pm Keith Gelman Trumpet Studio - Music room	3 9:00am Bread & Breakfast



Legend:

AA—Alcoholics Anonymous ESL—English as a Second Language

SCA—Society for Creative Anachronism

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

269/343-3453

www.poppottage.org

Facebook: Prince of Peace, Portage, MI-ELCA