



Tidings of Peace

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

February 2026

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

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On January 15, I shared this infographic from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) of Minnesota page on my personal Facebook page.

Along with the graphic, I wrote these words: *"Things are scary and overwhelming right now no matter what age you are. Talking about it can help - especially when we do so in ways that remind us we aren't alone or helpless in the chaos. The voices demanding uniformity and complete obedience to their whims want us afraid because that makes us easier to control. Fear tries to keep us alone and apart.*

Listen instead for the voices speaking the truth with courage and encouraging others in love. Listen for the voices reminding us that we are strongest when we - in all our glorious diversity - are together.

God's voice sounds like that. Jesus calls us into community in unity, not uniformity. The Spirit is full of compassion and does not seek to control us through violence and fear."

In John's gospel, Jesus says to his disciples, *"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid."* (14:27) This is part of a long conversation with them during their final meal together before Jesus' death. The disciples have every reason to feel troubled and afraid. Rome's power is terrifyingly close and Jesus has been telling them about his impending death at the hands of those who are threatened by his message and mission.

Pastor's Page

The infographic features a family of three (a man, a woman, and a child) looking at a tablet together. A circular logo for 'early risers' with the tagline 'Waking up to racial equity in early childhood.' is in the top right. The title 'HOW TO TALK TO KIDS ABOUT ICE' is in large, bold, black letters. Below it are three sections: 'WHY THESE CONVERSATIONS MATTER', 'WHAT NOT TO SAY', and 'WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD'.

WHY THESE CONVERSATIONS MATTER
Kids hear things. Without guidance, they feel anxious. Be present and honest.

WHAT NOT TO SAY

- Don't worry about it. (Feels dismissive)
- That won't happen to us. (Create false security)
- Constant News/Replays (Increases anxiety)

WHAT TO SAY INSTEAD
Focus on safety and validation.

- You aren't alone. Look for the helpers—I am one of them.
- It's okay to feel scared. Let's talk about it together.

AGES 3-6

- Focus on comfort
- Stick to routines and offer extra hugs.
- What to say: Some families aren't being treated nicely because of where they were born.
- Reassure them: Remind them they are safe and loved.



AGES 7 TO 11

- Explain the situation: Some families are being separated because of how they came here. That isn't right.
- Open dialogue: Let them ask questions.
- Safety first: Remind them to only discuss this with trusted adults.

AGES 12-18

- Be direct: It is unfair that people are treated differently based on where they are from.
- Listen: Encourage them to share their feelings.
- Empower them: Support them if they want to take positive action

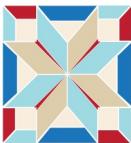
SOURCE: CHILDREN'S NETWORK

Continued on page 4

What's Happening at POP!

Prayer Shawl Ministry

Meets **Friday, February 6 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.



Quilters

Tuesdays, February 3 & 17 at 9:30 AM

Where: POP Social Hall

Not sure you can sew well enough to participate? Don't worry! They're happy to teach you, too. Contact Sheryl for more information: 267-6274.

Ladies Lunch Bunch

Meet at 11:45am on **February 17** at the Crew

5200 Portage Rd., Portage

Questions? Car pool? Need a ride?

Contact Dianne Hellman, 323-9392.



**Ruth Circle will meet
Monday, February 23 at 9:30am
in the Social Hall.**

If you are seeking a women's group who learn together, support one another and enjoy the fellowship of love and joy, please consider joining us. Study guides are available in the library or just come!

Contact Claudia Blahnik at 269/352-7430
or cjblahnik@yahoo.com,
if you have hesitations or questions.

**Join us for Ash Wednesday
Services February 18
at Noon and 7pm.**



**Midweek Lenten Services start
Wednesday February 25.**

We begin at 6pm with a soup supper,
followed by worship at 7pm.

Watch for a sign up for the soup
suppers in February.

The Lenten theme this year is "It is Finished".

These are the climactic words of Jesus' life. Everything he did and said lead to this final moment: It is finished.

These words are a translation of the important Greek word *τετέλεσται* (tetelestai). There were many nuances to this word, but what did he mean by these words? Join us on Wednesday evenings during Lent as we discover how those around Jesus might have heard these words and how we hear them today.

WOMEN'S SMALL GROUP

Monday, February 2 and 16, 7:00pm in the Flex Room

Continuing our discussion on
Bishop Michael Curry's Book, **LOVE IS THE WAY**

We'd love to have **YOU** join us too!!

Contact Diane Snyder, dmsnyder1149@gmail.com for
more information!!

Bunko

Join us Tuesday, February 10 at 1 PM

Where: POP Gathering Space

Just a few rolls of the dice and you'll have
this fun game mastered!



Men's Breakfast!

8:00 AM, Wednesday, February 11

Mark's Diner on Romence Rd. in Portage.
Join Pastor Rachel for breakfast, prayer, and
conversation.

Prince of Peace Book Club

On February 18th at 10:00am the POP Book Club will

meet to discuss "The Kitchen House" by Kathleen Grissom. This is an historical fiction novel about an Irish orphan who becomes an indentured servant on a VA plantation in the 1790's. She lives in the kitchen house and forms a bond with the slaves all the while straddling between the White and Black world. The themes of the book include race, family, love, and survival.

Looking ahead, the book we will be reading for March is "Home Front" by Kristin Hannah.



Pastor's Page Continued

In that chaos, to them in their fear, Jesus gives his own peace. He promises to send the Holy Spirit, the advocate and comforter, to be with them. He promises that the ruler of this world has no power over him, for Jesus' power comes from God.

Fellow disciples, Jesus' peace and that promise are also for us at this time, when chaos and fear are close at hand. Powerful people are misusing their power to abuse, intimidate, and sow fear and division among us. It is OK to feel scared because these things *are* scary. When you feel afraid or alone, remember Christ's promise and the promises of baptism – you are a beloved child of God, part of the family of faith that is called to proclaim the good news of God in Christ Jesus through word and deed; to serve all people, following the example of Jesus; and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth. You are not alone in your grief, your fear, or your faith.

While we don't all have the same resources, abilities, or approaches to this work of caring for our neighbors and working for justice and peace in our world – we *are* doing the work together. This kind of work needs all the different resources, abilities, and approaches we can bring to it.

Maybe you've got the time to contact your government representatives every day asking for specific legislative changes or the physical ability to march in a protest or the opportunity to comfort children who are worried about what they see on the news. Whenever your words and actions proclaim God's love for all people, you are living your faith. You are following Jesus' example.

So whatever trouble your hearts may be feeling in these difficult days, place it in God's hands and receive Christ's peace in return, that you may be encouraged and strengthened to continue living, serving, and loving faithfully alongside your siblings in Christ for the sake of the whole world.

Shalom,
Pastor Rachel

Children and Youth News

Middle and High School Youth group gathered in January for a gaming day.

We had lunch after worship and relaxed together with a few friendly rounds of MarioKart and Super Smash Bros. The youth enjoyed teaching the leaders about all the characters and their special skills. This was a fun experience and we hope to try something similar in the future!

Summer camp registration has begun! Several of our youth are already signed up to attend camp at Living Water Ministries at the end of June. Thank you for your generous support of LWM and their mission to remove financial barriers so that all kids can experience the radical love of Christ through the camp experience!

VBS planning is in the early stages as well! If you'd like to be involved in organizing and planning VBS, please contact Em or any of the members of the Christian Ed community.

January holds the beginning or continuation of several "seasons" – robotics, speech and drama, basketball, 4H, competitive cheer, indoor soccer, and more! Our kids and youth are involved in so many wonderful things, so be sure to ask them what they're up to! They're sure to have a great story to share.





Social Concerns Update -

As we move through winter months here are a few....

Did you know...

Did you know LWR backpacks to sew will be ready soon?

Did you know you don't have to sew to be a PoP quilter?

Did you know we "only" need 350 more bath towels for GWOH day?

Did you know you can donate erasers, pens, pencils, children's scissors at any time?

Did you know you can sign up to bring a shelter meal on the genius sign up?

Did you know we always need help at food distribution/free store?

Did you know all Sunday food donations are sent to Loaves and fishes?

Did you know the Jubilee Garden provides food for Mothers of Hope?

Did you know you can be a driver for the Shepards Center?

Did you know you can help with our two refugee families?

If you'd like more information about any of these "Did you know's" please contact any Social Concerns team member. Thank you for all you do.

Learning and Mission Opportunities



If you are looking for a good book to begin 2026, try *Rooted: Life at the Crossroads of Science, Nature and Spirit*. In this book, eco-philosopher, naturalist & award-winning author Lyanda Lynn Haupt offers an invitation to ecological consciousness and action. Then consider joining us right here at **Prince of Peace Lutheran Church on Sunday, February 22 from 5 - 7** for a thoughtful discussion around the intersection of science and spirituality presented in the book. If you prefer spoiler alerts, and want to hear about the book prior to reading it, that would be fine. All are welcome! Snacks and drinks will be provided.

Please RSVP for both events by going to the Hope for Creation website at www.hopeforcreation.net and clicking on Events at the top of the page.



FEBRUARY IS
BLACK HISTORY
MONTH

Mission Trip Opportunity Lutheran Disaster Response

Work continues in Western North and South Carolina following last year's Hurricane Helene.

You can help!

Pastor David Sprang has been working with Lutheran Disaster Response of the Carolinas to put together a mission trip opportunity for folks in Michigan to spend a week helping out in the Carolinas. There are a variety of ongoing work projects including new construction, muck-outs and repairs, tree and brush clean-up, landscaping and tree planting, and so much more. We are currently looking at dates in March, May and June for week-long work groups. Accommodations could be in a church, church camp or rooming house. Volunteers would share the costs for transportation, rooming and food.

Requirements include:

- Be at least 18 years of age
- Good physical health
- Some building and construction knowledge
- Able to work together for the common good of others

Having your own tools would be helpful. If you are interested, contact Pastor David Sprang soon as we formulate our trip and work.

Call /text: 989-980-0139
email: revdsprang@gmail.com

Fellowship

"I pray this winter be gentle and kind – a season of rest from the wheel of the mind." – John Geddes

Winter has a tendency to isolate us. However, if you are able to, step outside at night (or even open a window) when there is a fresh blanket of snow. The quiet is lovely and peaceful. Winter is still a time to notice the peace that nature provides and God gives us!

If you haven't seen someone in church for a while, think about dropping them a quick note to say that they are missed. A hand-written note can really brighten up someone's day in the age of digital everything! Don't forget to check the NEW church directory (coming out this Sunday) if you need contact information.



Back by popular demand, craft day is back! It will happen **Saturday, February 21th from 10AM-2:00PM**. We will set up tables in the Gathering Space to spread out and work on the craft of your choice. (We will have some tie blankets as well, if you don't have something to work on.) Bring a dish to pass, and we will all share a potluck lunch as we spend time together and chase the winter blues away!

Mark your calendars for the Easter season Pysanky egg event coming up on **Sunday, March 15th** after service. Kim and Wade Lawrence share their expertise every year for this event.



For those that don't know, Pysanky eggs are Ukrainian decorated Easter Eggs. The process of creating the designs and dying the eggs is really remarkable and fun. If you haven't tried this yet, you are missing out! The designs can be as ornate or as simple as you wish, so all are welcome. Lunch will be provided. A sign-up sheet will be in the Gathering Space few weeks before.



Plans are starting to come together for the **Women's Retreat May 22-May 23** at Das Dutchman Essenhaus in Middlebury, Indiana. We are still working on the workshop sessions, but the cost will be \$120 per person.

That includes a double occupancy room, breakfast and a buffet lunch at the restaurant. A \$50 deposit per room will be required sometime in April. More details are coming, but you might want to "save the date" to join us in a lovely and spiritual experience with other women from POP.

Our next committee meeting will be **Sunday, February 22th** after Sunday Service in the library. We are always happy to have new faces and ideas! We have a brand new year and are looking to planning favorite activities and some new ones too. We would love to have you!

Early Music Michigan Events

**Chant as Early Music II:
Chant Performance and Early Polyphony**
February 7, 2026 – 3 p.m.
First Congregational Church Kalamazoo, MI

In this workshop, we will explore some of the oldest manuscripts containing chant notation and use them to inform a highly nuanced performance of this remarkable music. There is a unique thrill that accompanies looking at a 1200-year-old manuscript and translating it into sound. And this won't be a purely academic exercise – we will sing the results of our explorations together!

[Register](#)

Music to Tug at your Harpstrings
March 1, 2026 – 3 p.m.
Trinity Lutheran Church Kalamazoo, MI

Early Music Michigan presents a program featuring Cleveland-based historical and folk harpist and soprano Anna O'Connell. The repertoire will include accompanied song from seventeenth-century France, Ireland, and Italy, which explores the unique sound of the Baroque double harp in combination with voice, flute, and other instruments.

[Buy tickets](#)



During January's council meeting we reviewed and approved the 2026 proposed budget ahead of POP's budget hearings and annual meeting coming up. We also spent time showing appreciation to outgoing council members. Lisa Creed, Paula Kana'an, and Nancy Pendziszewski are all finishing their service on council with the annual meeting. We extend heartfelt thanks and appreciation for their time, talents and efforts to help guide Prince of Peace. We look forward to them leading in other ways in our faith community, and we pray that they are filled with great pride and honor as they reflect on their time spent in leadership.

As always, council is honored to steward POP's mission. Please seek out those of us in yellow lanyards if you desire learning more.

Adult Faith Formation

February Adult Faith Formation - Sundays 9:15-10:15 am in the Flex room

You can attend Adult Faith Formation sessions remotely through Zoom. Look for the link in the E-blast that goes out Friday at Noon.

Faith & Finances (2/1, 2/8, 2/15)

How does faith shape the way we think about money, generosity, and responsibility for our neighbors? Join us in discussions of finance, led by trusted community partners and members of Prince of Peace.

Week 1 (2/1): United Way representatives will share about the **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)** program. With a location at PoP, they will help our neighbors meet their tax preparation needs with dignity.

Week 2 (2/8): Congregation members – **Michelle Eldridge and Lori Hanneman** - will share tax efficient strategies for **charitable giving and estate planning**.

Week 3 (2/15): A panel of **members from the PoP Social Concerns Committee** will share how they prayerfully discern which **organizations the church supports financially**.

Each session will begin with a brief scripture reflection and prayer, followed by presentations and conversation. Come for one week or all three. *All are welcome.*



Living Water Ministries

Faith Formation, Service, Leadership, and Community

Thank you so much for supporting our "Run the Race" campaign again this year. The generosity of donors such as you is what allows us to continue make a positive impact on so many young lives, including many of our own!

God Bless, Jon Deming



Lenten series (2/22-3/29)

This Lenten season, the Adult Faith Formation hour will use the JustFaith Ministries series *Unbound: Seeking the Freedom of God's Love*. Join us in following Jesus through the wilderness and into the heart of the empire. Along the way, we'll wrestle with what it means to be truly free: to remove our masks, reject false power, center the excluded, accept God's love, and choose life even in the shadow of darkness and despair. We'll meet characters like Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman at the well, the man born blind, and Lazarus, and explore how Jesus invites each of them – and us – to step into the light to claim life abundant. Come for one week or every week. *All are welcome.*

Week 1 (2/22): Lead Us Not into Temptation: Jesus in the Wilderness (Mat. 4:1-11) Journey with Jesus into the wilderness to name the temptations that often guide our choices, so that we might consciously choose the path that leads to love and freedom.

Living Our Faith

We, the Prince of Peace staff, are so grateful for you, the members of this incredible congregation! We thank you for your generosity at Christmas and throughout the year. We thank you for your grace and flexibility when things don't go as expected. We rejoice in all the ways you show your faithfulness in serving and strive to be instruments of God's peace for the sake of the world. We are blessed to serve with you!

In Peace, Pastor Rachel, Tamara, Janet, Mike, Marilyn, Steve, Em, Intern Kathleen, Melissa and Megan

Just a note to thank you for the Christmas Staff Gift. It's been a joy to be here at Prince of Peace this past year.
Janet

- *Thank you for your recent contribution to, Kalamazoo Loaves and Fishes. Right now we are battling unique challenges and ongoing uncertainty as more families than ever are facing food insecurity. As we begin a new year, let us be reminded of the power of community and kindness. Thank you for standing with us to lift up our neighbors and ensure that no one in Kalamazoo County and surrounding communities goes hungry.*
— Jennifer Johnson, Executive Director
- *We wanted to take moment to express our deepest gratitude for your recent donation to the Portage Community Center. Please take time to read the heartwarming story in the letter. You will find it on the Social Concerns board across from the library.* — Chris Buckley, Executive Director



- *Thank you for the donation you generously made in 2025 to the Kalamazoo Refugee Resource Collective. Your contributions are essential to our mission to transform the experience of refugees and immigrants from a life of uncertainty to a life of freedom, equity and security.* — Neena Marion, KRRC Founder.
- *Thank you for your generous gift. We appreciate your contribution to the Shepherd's Center of Greater Kalamazoo's program that transports seniors to vital health-related appointments.* — Mary Beth Sarhatt, Executive Director
- *Thank you for your gift to Ministry with Community. We believe no one should face life's hardest challenges alone. Thank you for being part of our mission.*
— Sid Ellis, Executive Director
- *On behalf of Western Michigan University, I would like to express our heartfelt gratitude for your donation supporting the Sieta Scholars Program* — Monica K. Priest, Director of Donor Relations.

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

2/1	Christopher Laughlin	2/12	Christine Wagley	2/21	August Pederson
	Juha Lassila	2/13	Debbie Barnett		Gabriel Carlson
	Micki Holder	2/14	Karl Klemm	2/22	Clarrisa Oskins
2/2	Karen Adams		James Copeland III		Stephen Wisloski
2/3	Zachary Thommen	2/15	Nancy Jean		Harper Bovenkerk
	Lindsay Oswald		Carter Highhouse	2/24	Kinsley Kana'an
2/5	Jacob Preston		Elise Frederick	2/25	Haley Kana'an
2/6	Peter Eldridge	2/16	Brian Rieck	2/26	Robert Clyne
	Judy Buttery	2/17	Betsy Stalker		
	Karen Shaw		Lynne Wathen		
2/7	Eleanor Maurer	2/18	Kristie Zimmerman		
2/9	Chris Hopper		Cindy Sederstrom		
	Jackson Seguin		David Naugle		
2/10	Diane Crocker	2/19	Kevin Pedersen		
2/11	Eliza Maurer		Shirley Thompson		
	Harry Biles		Ray Isakson		

Anniversaries

David & Sarah Maurer 2/ 29



FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

Prince of Peace Calendar — February

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:15am Faith Formation All Ages 10:30am Worship 11:45am Fellowship Time	2 Groundhog Day 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group 7:00pm Women's Study Group - Flex Room	3 9:00am ESL 9:15am Staff Meeting 9:30am Quilters - Social Hall 6:00pm Great Lakes Adventure Club - Social Hall/Flex 7:00pm Bells	4 10:00am VITA Tax Clinic 10:00am WMU Center for Disabilities 11:00am Pastor's Bible Study - Zoom 12:00pm Pray Without Ceasing	5 9:00am ESL 1:00pm Food Distribution 1:00pm Free Store 6:30pm South County Fiber Arts 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	6 10:00am ESL Open Tutoring 10:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry - Peace Lounge 7:00pm K-Wings Game	7
8 9:15am Faith Formation All Ages 10:30am Worship 11:45am Fellowship Time	9 3:00pm Social Concerns Meeting 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group 5:30pm Finance Committee mtg. - Zoom 7:00pm Personnel/Executive Committee - Zoom	10 9:00am ESL 9:15am Staff Meeting 1:00pm Bunko - Gathering Space 7:00pm Bells	11 8:00am Men's Breakfast @ Mark's Diner 10:00am VITA Tax Clinic 10:00am WMU Center for Disabilities 11:00am Pastor's Bible Study - Zoom 12:00pm Pray Without Ceasing	12 9:00am ESL 6:00pm Partners in Profit 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	13 10:00am ESL Open Tutoring	14 Valentine's Day 
15 Transfiguration Sunday 9:15am Faith Formation All Ages 10:30am Worship 11:45am Fellowship Time 12:00pm Printmaking for Youth	16 Presidents' Day 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group 6:00pm Master Gardeners - Sanctuary 7:00pm Church Council meeting - Zoom 7:00pm Women's Study Group - Flex Room 7:00pm Worship Committee Meeting - Zoom	17 9:00am ESL 9:15am Staff Meeting 9:30am Quilters - Social Hall 11:45am Ladies Lunch Bunch @ 12:00pm Kalamazoo Conference 5:30pm Property Committee - Zoom 7:00pm Bells	18 Ash Wednesday 10:00am VITA Tax Clinic 10:00am WMU Center for Disabilities 11:00am Library Committee - Library 11:00am Pastor's Bible Study - Zoom 12:00pm Ash Wednesday Service 12:00pm Pray Without Ceasing 7:00pm Ash Wednesday Service	19 Newsletter Deadline 9:00am ESL 1:00pm Food Distribution 1:00pm Free Store 6:00pm Nurse Honor Guard of Kalamazoo 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	20 10:00am ESL Open Tutoring	21 10:00am Sewing and Craft Day
22 9:15am Faith Formation All Ages 10:30am Worship 11:45am Fellowship Time 12:00pm Fellowship Committee Meeting 5:00pm Hope for Creation	23 9:30am Ruth Circle 1:30pm Care Team Meeting 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group 6:00pm Justice and Diversity Meeting - Zoom 6:30pm Nami Support Group 7:00pm Christian Education Committee Planning	24 Open Doors Men's Shelter Meal 9:00am ESL 9:15am Staff Meeting 7:00pm Bells 7:00pm Youth Committee - Zoom	25 10:00am VITA Tax Clinic 10:00am WMU Center for Disabilities 11:00am Pastor's Bible Study - Zoom 12:00pm Pray Without Ceasing 5:15pm Nat'l Youth Gathering Info Mtg - Hybrid 6:00pm Lenten Soup Supper 7:00pm Lenten Mid-Week Service	26 9:00am ESL 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	27 10:00am ESL Open Tutoring	28

Legend:

AA—Alcoholics Anonymous

ESL—English as a Second Language

NAMI—National Alliance on Mental Illness

Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

269/343-3453

www.popportage.org

Facebook: Prince of Peace, Portage, MI-ELCA