



*"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

### Easter Sermon Series:

### Christ Is...

The season of Easter begins on April 5 this year, with the celebration of the resurrection. We'll bust our "alleluias" out of their burial place where we laid them on Transfiguration Sunday in February and rejoice in Christ Our Risen Savior! But the good news of Christ alive among us doesn't stop after one day or even one week! The season of Easter is 7 Sundays (a week of weeks) plus one more week for good measure, culminating in the celebration of Pentecost (this year, on May 24)! In the language of ancient biblical numerology, 7 is considered the perfect number, so 7+1 symbolizes something even better than perfect.

Early Christians started worshipping Jesus and observing the sabbath on Sundays instead of the traditional Jewish Friday evening to Saturday sabbath each week because the resurrection happened, "early in the morning, on the first day of the week." Some traditions referred to Sunday as the "eighth day" because of that 7+1 symbolism as well.

With all this in mind, we will spend the seven Sundays of the season of Easter contemplating who Christ is to us and why each of those aspects of Christ matters to us and how we live out our faith. We can't live it perfectly, but God's grace always has us covered!

Here's how the series will shape up after Easter Sunday:

- Sunday, April 12 - Christ is Our Peace
- Sunday, April 19 - Christ is Our Companion
- Sunday, April 26 - Christ is Our Shepherd
- Sunday, May 3 - Christ is Our Way, Truth, and Life
- Sunday, May 10 - Christ is Our Advocate
- Sunday, May 17 - Christ is Our Hope

Invite a friend to worship with you so they can hear the good news this Easter season, too!

Shalom,  
Pastor Rachel



# What's Happening at POP!



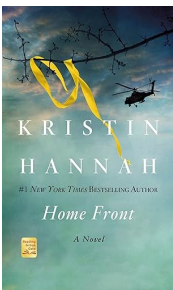
<i>Maundy Thursday</i>	April 2	7:00 PM
<i>Good Friday</i>	April 3	7:00 PM
<i>Easter Vigil</i>	April 4	7:00 PM
<i>Easter Sunday</i>	April 5	8:00 AM & 10:30 AM

*enhanced Fellowship between services.*

## WOMEN'S SMALL GROUP

We will continue our discussion on Richard Rohr's book, *Falling Upward*. It's been an enriching discussion and we're just getting started!! Hope you can join us either in person or via Zoom on **April 6 and 20**, 7 pm, Flex Room!! See you then!! More information, contact Diane Snyder, [dmsnyder1149@gmail.com](mailto:dmsnyder1149@gmail.com)

## Prince of Peace Book Club



The POP Book Club will meet on **April 15th at 10am** in the Peace Lounge to discuss "Home Front" by Kristin Hannah. This is a novel about a wife and mother who is also a National Guard helicopter pilot. In 2005 she is deployed to Iraq during the war. This experience had a devastating effect on her and her family. Can they recover or will the family be torn apart?

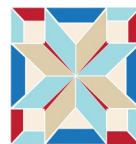
For May 20th we will read "Centre Street" by local author Sharon Wolbers Pendola. The novel is about growing up in Portage in the 1950's and 60's.



**Ruth Circle will meet  
Monday, April 27 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](mailto:cjblahnik@yahoo.com),  
if you have hesitations or questions.



## Quilters

**Tuesdays, April 7 & 21 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.

## Prayer Shawl Ministry

Meets **Friday, April 3 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, April 8**

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



## Bunko

**Join us Tuesday, April 14 at 1 PM**

**Where: POP Gathering Space**

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

Bunko is easy to learn and offers wonderful opportunities for conversation and connection with others.

Call Carla Hannemann at 269/216-3498  
for more information.



## Ladies Lunch Bunch

Meet at 11:45am on **April 21** at Chinn Chinn  
52885 N Main, Mattawan

Questions? Car pool? Need a ride?  
**Contact Dianne Hellman, 323-9392.**

## Children and Youth News

### Our kids and youth are busy people!

This time of year plays host to many games, events, performances, and more. If you have a chance to ask one of our young people what they are involved in, I encourage you to do so! They're all so knowledgeable and just a little encouragement can go a long way when inviting them to share what they know.

Six of our middle and high school instrumentalists recently performed in district Band Festivals. At Festival, bands travel together to perform two or three pieces that they've been preparing for a few months. These performances are rated and commented on by adjudicators. They also sight-read a brand-new piece as a band for an adjudicator. These scores are compiled to give each band a score from 1-5 with 1 being "superior". Many of our students' bands were awarded 1's and 2's at their festivals. One such festival was hosted by band director Scottie W! As a former music educator myself, I know what goes into preparing an ensemble for this type of competition, and the excitement that comes from seeing your hard work pay off.

One of our high school youth spends the winter months with a team of peers designing, building, and programming a functioning robot. This robot must be able to complete certain tasks in competition with other teams' robots. Some of these tasks are directed by a human (a 'driver' at the edge of the arena), and other tasks are completed autonomously (a series of commands is preprogrammed and the robot walks through them without human input). The robot's performance is scored by how well it completed its tasks, both human-directed and autonomous. The team competes several times in a weekend tournament, bracket-style. I was very impressed when given a tour of the "pit" area where robots are tuned and tweaked between competitions!

Another of our high school youth participates in Forensics, an activity that helps students practice public speaking and develop skills to create and communicate a well-reasoned position. There are many different 'specialties' that a student can choose when competing in forensics, from persuasive or informational presentations to dramatic interpretations of literature and poetry. Others will get their topics only a few minutes before presenting, having to think on their feet to deliver thoughts that are coherent and organized. I don't think I could do this as an adult, much less as a teenager! These students spend time

preparing with their teammates and coaches and then compete against other students in their area of expertise. Portage Central's Forensics team is coached by our own Tyler B!

Several of our kids and youth participate in winter and/or spring sports! Seasons are wrapping up for basketball, water polo, futsal (similar to soccer, played indoors), wrestling, and swim & dive. Track & field, soccer, and baseball will begin very soon! I always enjoy a chance to experience something new and different when cheering on our youth.

These activities help our youth with skills like confidence, leadership, and teamwork – skills our congregation benefits from whenever they serve during worship or by being an active part of our faith community. We are so blessed that they choose to give of their time and talents here!

If you're ever interested in checking out a game, performance, or event, reach out to me! I try to attend something for each of our youth over the course of the school year to see them in action, and I'd be happy to have you join me! You can always check out the bulletin board outside my office door marked "Em's Fridge" to see programs, lineups, and pictures from the youth's events that I've attended. See if one sparks a conversation!

Together in community,  
Em Witteveen, Engagement Coordinator

### Save the Date!





**Spring is here!!** And so our Jubilee Garden is about ready for your help. Paul MacNellis and Mark Clyne are beginning to work on building more raised beds, making it a bit easier for us to work. Mark, our resident Master Gardener, invites you to take a close up look and contact him at [markclyne@sncglobal](mailto:markclyne@sncglobal) for more info if you're thinking about helping in the garden this year.

Remember, most of our produce goes to Mothers of Hope each weekend where they provide fresh vegetables at a very low cost, the rest of the gardens produce goes to Loaves and Fishes, Kalamazoo.

Secondly, Social Concerns invites you to donate to the upcoming God's Work Our Hands day in September. Items needed include bath towels, bar soap, toothbrushes, nail clippers, combs, #2 unsharpened pencils, pens, erasers, spiral notebooks, rulers, scissors, and pencil sharpeners. We also have a nice assortment of backpacks to easily sew, found in the gathering space. Thanks for all your help.

### Will you help our neighbors?

It takes 4-5 people to help this ministry. Please sign-up and **arrive by 12:30 to help set up. Sign up is on the website.**  
<https://popportage.org/pages/food-distribution-signup>



### 2026 Open Doors Meal Sign up!

November and December available for our Open Doors Meal Ministry.

Here is the link to sign up <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/9040B4CADAF23A1FA7-61372536-2026#/>



Wednesday, April 22

## The Lord's Prayer

### The Lord's Prayer, Confirmation Class Edition

This year's confirmation class (current 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> graders), spent several weeks studying the Lord's prayer. We talked about each petition of the prayer and what it has meant to Lutheran Christians for generations. We studied what Luther's Small Catechism says about the prayer and then translated these familiar words into our own words. This kind of translation work helps us really think about what we're saying when we pray this prayer each week in worship.

Our caregiver in heaven,  
May your name stay holy.  
Let your peace come.  
Let your goodness spread through Earth and heaven.  
Give us every day our necessities.  
Let us give grace to others as grace has been given to us.  
Protect us from the things we can't control and we do not know.  
Free us from harm.  
For you are wise and kind and we trust your good plans for us always.  
I agree!



For more information on Kalamazoo Earth Day Events follow the link below:

<https://www.kalamazooearthday.com/copy-of-earth-day-2025>

# Fellowship Continued

*"The great gift of Easter is hope."*  
- Basil C. Hume

## Easter Brunch

As we celebrate Easter this year, the Fellowship Committee is organizing a return to the Easter Brunch! Fellowship will provide coffee, tea, water and lemonade to drink. If you have signed up to bring items that are shelf stable (boxes of crackers, cookies etc.) or easily refrigerated items (cheese, fruit, etc.) you can drop those off prior to Easter. If you are bringing items like casseroles or quiches, please bring them in **already heated** as we do not have the oven space to heat these up at church. Everything will need to be brought to church Sunday morning by 8:30AM. The committee will be setting up for serving between services and after the 10:30 worship. If you have a spare pair of hands that wishes to assist with set up or clean up, please contact Gail or Tamara for details.

## Women's Retreat 2026

We continue to make plans for our POP women's retreat on May 22-23 WOMEN'S RETREAT at Das Essenhaus in Middlebury, Indiana. There will be accommodations for either single or double occupancy. Pricing includes your room, breakfast and buffet lunch on Saturday. (Friday dinner will be on your own.) This weekend retreat looks to be a lovely time for the women of POP to deepen old friendships and create new ones while exploring our relationship with God. See page 7 for more information.



## Kalamazoo Growlers

POP will spend a lovely summer evening cheering on the Kalamazoo Growlers on **Friday, June 26th**. First pitch will be at 6:35PM. Tickets will be \$15 per person and will include a Growler's hat! (Children 3 years and younger are free.) The seats this year will be on the 1st base line behind the Growler's dugout. (*No more sun in everyone's eyes!*) Pastor will be singing the National Anthem! Sign ups for tickets coming soon.

## Save the Date Alert

Mark your calendars for a new and exciting outing for POP! We will be organizing a group to attend the Demolition Derby at the Galesburg Speedway on August 29. We are still working on details – stay tuned!

## Sunday Fellowship

We are in continual need of volunteers to handle the coffee fellowship after service. We have prepared a list of instructions that can be referenced to make this easier. Please contact any member of the Fellowship Committee for details.

## Let Us Know What You are Up To!

We are going to draw attention to events that POP members are participating in. This could be a concert, community activity, sporting event or school event that is open for POP fans to cheer on and support other members. Please contact Tammy Cooper with your events at [mamacoops@aol.com](mailto:mamacoops@aol.com) to be included in the monthly newsletter. We will need date, place and time. Due to privacy concerns, we will not be noting the individuals by name just that a POP member is involved. You will also find cards to complete and give to the office on the welcome table in the Gathering Space

## Local Outing Ideas

*Be advised, unless noted, these will require an entrance fee or tickets. Google the individual event for additional details to plan your outing.*

**Kalamazoo Comic Con** – April 10-12 at the Kalamazoo Expo Center

**Grand Rapids Swing Dance** – Every Tuesday in April, 7PM at the Grand Rapids Public Museum

**USA Tae Kwon Do Championships 2026** – Saturday, April 25<sup>th</sup> at 9:30AM at Parchment High School

## Next Meeting:

April 19 after church in the Library.



**Administrative  
Professionals Day**

Wednesday, April 22

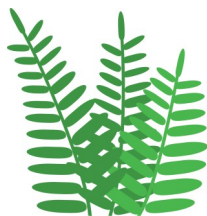
## Council and Committees

### Council CORNER

During Council's March meeting we heard a presentation from members of Prince of Peace's Justice and Diversity Committee and the next steps in exploring becoming a Reconciling in Christ partner. We also heard encouraging updates from many areas of ministry at PoP, including Easter planning, fellowship events, youth summer opportunities, support for the YWCA, and the growing prayer ministry. The property committee also shared several updates, including replacement of faded handicap parking signs and plans to address winter damage to landscaping near the Gathering Space entrance. We are grateful for the many ways God is at work through the life of this church as we move through the Lenten season and look ahead to Easter. As always, council is honored to steward PoP's mission. Please seek out those of us in yellow lanyards if you desire learning more.

#### Palms and Spring Plants

Sign-up and join others to prepare our sanctuary and Gathering Space to welcome Easter Sunday on Saturday, April 4. A signup sheet is in the Gym.



**Saturday, May 2 at 8:30 to 12:00**  
is Spring Clean Up Day.

Grab your gloves and rakes and help us spruce up the church lawns after a long winter.

*Rain date: May 9*

#### **Mike Moyers a contemporary impressionist tells the story of life and faith through his art.**

A collection of his work from Palm Sunday through Easter Resurrection and beyond will be exhibited in the Gathering Space and Sanctuary during April and May. Envisioning scripture he strives to "paint God's wonders" by diving deep into prayer and Word before lifting the brush. His work calls us to look beyond familiar ways of expressing these stories opening us to "contemplative interpretation between God and the viewer."

The exhibit is made possible with donations to the Liturgical Arts dedicated fund.

## News from the Endowment Committee

**The Extended Ministries Endowment Committee is pleased to announce that funds will be available in 2026 for disbursement to potential extended ministries that are not supported by the operational budget of POP. The amount available for 2026 is \$8,260.69.**

New recipients are prioritized over recipients who have received funding in previous years. All requests are carefully evaluated by the Endowment Committee.

The committee welcomes written requests with the following information: 1) Name of requestor (POP member) 2) Name of extended ministry 3) Brief description and potential impact of the ministry 4) Amount of monies requested.

The Endowment Committee will then review the request and determine if monies will be distributed. Please contact Mark Clyne via email ([markclyne@sbcglobal.net](mailto:markclyne@sbcglobal.net)) or any of the other Endowment Committee members (Carole Nelson, Joyce Stout, Alex Baas-Peterson, Don Jones) or fill out a paper form available from the church office with any requests and place them the Endowment Fund mailbox in the workroom. If you use a paper form, please notify an Endowment Committee member as we currently do not monitor the mailbox regularly.

Please submit your request at least 1 month in advance of the need for the money to allow us to process your request and before June 30th to insure funds will still be available for your request.

# Women's Retreat



## WOMEN'S RETREAT

Prince of Peace Women's Retreat

May 22-23, 2026

Essenhaus Inn  
240 US 20, Middlebury, IN 46540

Join us for a women's retreat beginning Friday, May 22, and ending Saturday afternoon, May 23. The retreat is being led by Laurie Brown, Intern Kathleen, and Beth Whately. Our theme is: *Drawing From the Well*. You can find information about the Inn and the onsite restaurant at [essenhaus.com](http://essenhaus.com).

**Cost:** \$110 double occupancy; \$220 single occupancy

All payments should be made to Prince of Peace and we will pay one bill for everyone. Your cost covers your one-night stay and breakfast and the lunch buffet on Saturday. We have a total of 20 rooms available. Double occupancy is not required, but encouraged, so as many of our members as possible can participate.

### Friday, May 22:

- Check in is 3 PM or later.
- Dinner on your own. There is a restaurant on site.
- First Session: 7-9 PM in the conference center.  
*Why are we afraid?*



### Saturday, May 23:

- Breakfast served from 6:30-10:00 AM in the atrium of the conference center by our rooms. The hot foods alternate each day and include items such as sausage, biscuits and gravy or eggs. Fresh pastries and breads from the on-campus bakery, cereals, waffles, hard boiled eggs, yogurt and fruit are also included.
- Checkout: We need to check out of our rooms by 10 AM.
- Second Session: 9-11 AM in the conference center. *What is my faith story?*
- Buffet Lunch served at the onsite restaurant from 11:30-12:45.  
We have a group reservation that includes the buffet and your beverage. (*It does not include their famous pies. You're on your own for pie.*) You can find a menu on the website noted above.
- Third Session: 1-3 PM in the conference center. *Go and Tell!*
- Communion and Departure:  
Pastor Rachel will lead us in communion and prayer at 3 p.m.



# Living Our Faith

- *We received your generous donation to Samaritas. . Thank you so much for your kindness and for thinking of us. The work we do with our foster care children and families is very much needed, and this donation will help us provide the basic needs of many of the children that come to us.*  
– Alexis Parker, Foster Care Program Manager

## 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.

## Thrivent News

In 2025 Prince of Peace received \$548 through the Thrivent Choice® program thanks to our members who are Thrivent members and clients.

Thrivent clients with membership: Don't forget to direct 2025 Choice Dollars® by March 31 at [thrivent.com/thriventchoice](http://thrivent.com/thriventchoice).



### On March 15 Prince of Peace was the Synod designated prayer partner.

We received many cards and letters from our synod churches. You can read them after Easter, when they will be posted on the glass over the Gathering Space tables.

## Birthdays and Anniversaries

4/1	Christine Guthrie Tom Webster	4/13	Jeff Schuhknecht Adam Beuker	4/21	Justin Hannemann Michael Girand	4/28	Emily Walker
4/4	Noah Mickelson	4/15	Camden Hart Carole Nelson Libby Erdmann	4/22	Wade Lawrence	4/29	Bev Schmidt
4/6	Reagan Smith Michelle Eldridge	4/18	Trish Wiita Scott Meier	4/23	Annika Eklov James Whately	4/30	Amy Baumann Hannah Carlson
4/9	John Beatty Nicolas Eklov	4/19	Dianne Hellman Gregory Guthrie Jack Guthrie	4/24	Matthew Koester		
4/10	Callan Davis	4/20	Jonathan Deming	4/26	Peter Olsen Darcy Banitt		
4/11	Mitch Maurer			4/27	Eric Carlson Arthur Maurer		
4/12	Alison Carlson Ann DiJulio						

### Anniversaries

Judson & Idelle Stemaly	April 1
Louis & Nancy Jean	April 5
Matt & Sarah Erdmann	April 5
Joyce & Gordon Hare	April 7
Gary Bischof & Karen Helmeke	April 8
James & Kimberly Banner	April 17
Sandra & Donald Mertz	April 21
James Morgan & Tamara Preston	April 25
Lisa & Steve Creed	April 25
Gregory & Christine Guthrie	April 26
Tom & Jennifer Palarz	April 29
Timothy & Paula Kana'an	April 30



## APRIL BIRTHDAYS & ANNIVERSARIES

# Prince of Peace Calendar — April

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
<b>29</b> <b>Palm Sunday</b> 9:15am Faith Formation All Ages 10:30am Worship 11:45am Fellowship Time with Palm Sundaes & Palm Crosses 1:30pm Brass Rehearsal	<b>30</b> 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group	<b>31</b> 9:15am Staff Meeting	<b>1</b> 10:00am VITA Tax Clinic 10:00am WMU Center for Disabilities 11:00am Pastor's Bible Study - Zoom 12:00pm Pray Without Ceasing	<b>2</b> <b>Maundy Thursday</b> 1:00pm Food Distribution 1:00pm Free Store 6:30pm South County Fiber Arts 7:00pm Maundy Thursday Service	<b>3</b> <b>Good Friday</b> 10:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry - Peace Lounge 7:00pm Good Friday Service	<b>4</b> 7:00pm Easter Vigil Service
<b>5</b> <b>Easter Sunday</b> 8:00am Worship 9:00am Enhanced Easter Fellowship 10:30am Worship	<b>6</b> <b>Office closed for Easter                      Monday</b> 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group 7:00pm Women's Study Group - Flex Room	<b>7</b> 9:00am ESL 9:15am Staff Meeting 9:30am Quilters - Social Hall 6:00pm Great Lakes Adventure Club - Social Hall/Flex	<b>8</b> 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	<b>9</b> 9:00am ESL 5:00pm Hope for Creation - Gym 6:00pm Partners in Profit 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>10</b> 10:00am ESL Open Tutoring	<b>11</b>
<b>12</b> 9:15am Faith Formation All Ages 10:30am Worship 11:45am Fellowship Time	<b>13</b> 3:00pm Social Concerns Meeting 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group 5:30pm Finance Committee mtg. - Zoom 7:00pm Personnel/Executive Committee - Zoom	<b>14</b> 9:00am ESL 9:15am Staff Meeting 1:00pm Bunko - Gathering Space 7:00pm Bells	<b>15</b> 10:00am Book Club 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 Pray Without Ceasing 7:00pm Church Council meeting - Zoom	<b>16</b> <b>Newsletter Deadline</b> 9:00am ESL 1:00pm Food Distribution 1:00pm Free Store 6:00pm Nurse Honor Guard of Kalamazoo 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>17</b> 10:00am ESL Open Tutoring	<b>18</b> 
<b>19</b> 9:15am Faith Formation All Ages 10:30am Worship 11:45am Fellowship Time 12:00pm Fellowship Committee Meeting	<b>20</b> 5:30pm AA "Promises" Support Group 6:00pm Master Gardeners - Sanctuary 7:00pm Women's Study Group - Flex Room 7:00pm Worship Committee Meeting - Zoom	<b>21</b> 9:00am ESL 9:15am Staff Meeting 9:30am Quilters - Social Hall 10:00am Synod Assembly Planning 11:45am Ladies Lunch Bunch @ Chinn Chinn 5:30pm Property Committee - Zoom 7:00pm Bells	<b>22</b> <b>Administrative                      Professionals Day</b> <b>Earth Day</b> 10:00am WMU Center for Disabilities 11:00am Pastor's Bible Study - Zoom 12:00pm Pray Without Ceasing	<b>23</b> 9:00am ESL 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>24</b> 10:00am ESL Open Tutoring	<b>25</b> 8:00am Cathwren Warner Memorial Craft Retreat
<b>26</b> 9:15am Faith Formation All Ages 10:30am Worship 11:45am Fellowship Time 12:00pm MS/HS Youth Group	<b>27</b> 9:30am Ruth Circle 2:00pm 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- Zoom	<b>28</b> Open Doors Men's Shelter Meal 9:00am ESL 9:15am Staff Meeting 7:00pm Bells 7:00pm Youth Committee - Zoom	<b>29</b> 10:00am WMU Center for Disabilities 11:00am Pastor's Bible Study - Zoom 12:00pm Pray Without Ceasing	<b>30</b> 9:00am ESL 7:00pm Choir Rehearsal	<b>1</b> 10:00am ESL Open Tutoring 10:00am Prayer Shawl Ministry - Peace Lounge	<b>2</b> 8:30am Spring Clean Up

**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.poppottage.org](http://www.poppottage.org)

Facebook: *Prince of Peace, Portage, MI-ELCA*