



Zion Lutheran Church
308 Lambert Street
PO Box 56
Oklee, MN 56742
218-796-5128

Oklee Lutheran Parish

June 2025

Marijo Vik, SAM
931-203-4106
Parish Secretary Bonny Cote
bcote@okleelutheran.org
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Salem Lutheran Church
29531 180th St SE
PO Box 56
Oklee, MN 56742

Check out our website: OkleeLutheran.org

In my newsletter articles over the next few months, I hope to share my concerns about what's happening in the world, particularly in the church, and what, if anything, can be done to change that picture.

The numbers tell the story of what's happening.

Christianity is the largest religious group in the world, with an estimated 2.3 to 2.6 billion adherents in 2020. For more than a century, the Catholic Church has been the single-largest religious body in the United States. Its number of adherents, more than 60 million, accounts for roughly 20 percent of the U.S. population.

According to the Pew Research Center, Islam is the fastest-growing major religion, with a projected growth rate of 70% between 2015 and 2060. The global Muslim population is projected to increase from 1.8 billion in 2015 to nearly 3 billion in 2060, making up over 30% of the world's population.

What are the "mainline" Protestant churches?

The largest churches are sometimes referred to as the "Seven Sisters of American Protestantism," a term apparently coined by William Hutchison.

The "Seven Sisters" are:

1. United Methodist Church (UMC) was the largest mainline Protestant denomination among the "Seven Sisters" with 5.4 million members in the United States (2022)
2. Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) had approximately 2.8 million members and 8,500 congregations (2023)
3. Episcopal Church had 1.6 million active baptized members, of whom 1.4 million members are located in the United States (2022)
4. Presbyterian Church (USA) had 1.1 million active members in 8,700 congregations (2021).

5. American Baptist Churches USA had approximately 1.1 million members (2017).
6. United Church of Christ had about 710,000 members (2022)
7. Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) had about 278,000 members (2022)

The history of mainline churches

Dr. Dwight Zscheile, from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, wrote in *Living Lutheran*, "After the American Revolution, a new paradigm for institutional life emerged and came to dominate American religion and society—the voluntary association. Congregations prior to that time carried over the "state church" model from Europe.

Congregations began to organize themselves as voluntary societies, which individuals could choose to join and support with donations. Ted A. Smith, a professor at the Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, says this "Age of Association" also brought countless service clubs and other ways of organizing, joining, participating, and serving. Many denominations emerged during this era.

Since the late 1960s, Western societies have increasingly come to inhabit what the philosopher Charles Taylor calls the "Age of Authenticity," where people focus on discovering and expressing their true selves, not affiliating with or serving institutions. In fact, institutions are regarded with deep suspicion.

Zscheile says, "The systems of the ELCA (congregations, synods, the churchwide organization) and its partners were designed for the Age of Association, not the Age of Authenticity. No one should be surprised that they are unraveling as church membership declines.

If you talk to leaders of other voluntary association systems, such as scouting, labor unions, and service organizations, you'll hear the same story. Declining membership is not just the church's problem—it's a larger cultural transformation."

Decline of churches

Zscheile continues, “This causes enormous loss and grief, particularly in older generations, for whom the Age of Association model worked well. Many congregations are being sustained by faithful elders who know how to build, serve, and sustain voluntary associations. They puzzle at why their children and grandchildren aren’t interested in affiliating and participating.

Pastors and other leaders are expected to manage and revitalize the Age of Association institutions, typically with fewer resources. No wonder that 51% of mainline Protestant clergy have considered leaving full-time ministry in the past year, according to a recent study by the Barna Group. Getting younger people to affiliate with and participate in (let alone sacrificially support) voluntary associations in the Age of Authenticity is a difficult proposition.”

The ELCA had over five million members when it was launched in 1988, down to 2.8 million in 2023. It has declined since, and the decline has been accelerating.

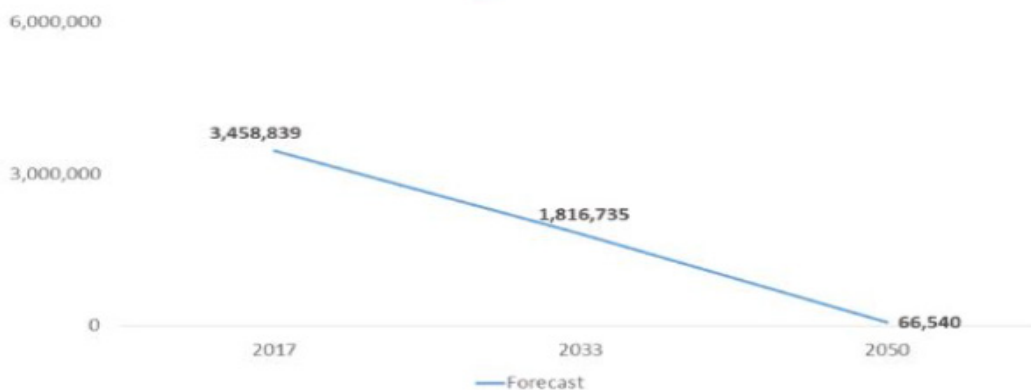
According to projections from the ELCA’s Office of Research and Evaluation, the whole ELCA denomination will have fewer than 67,000 members in 2050 (down from 2.8 million), with fewer than 16,000 in worship on an average Sunday by 2041.

That’s right: according to current trends, the church will basically cease to exist within the next generation.

What can be done?

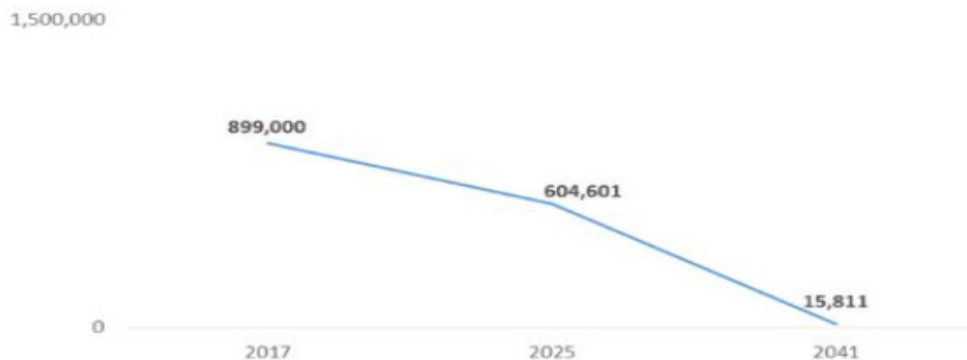
And do you want to be part of the discussion to think “outside the box”?

Baptized Membership in the ELCA 2017-2050 Projections



Source: ELCA Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

Average Weekly Worship Attendance 2017-2041 Projections



Source: ELCA Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation

~ Parish News ~



Bennet Larson
passed away
peacefully on
May 5, 2025.



• Zion's next council meeting is **Wednesday, June 4th** at 7:00 p.m.

• Salem's next council meeting is **Tuesday, June 10th** at 6:30 p.m.

• The Parish Board meeting will be on **Thursday, June 12th** at 7:00 p.m.

Please attend your meetings!
It is important to be there to support your church & community.



June 1:

Acts 16:16-34; Psalm 97;
Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21; John 17:20-26

June 8:

Acts 2:1-21; Psalm 104:24-34, 35b;
Romans 8:14-17; John 14:8-17 [25-27]

June 15:

Proverbs 8:1-4, 22-31; Psalm 8;
Romans 5:1-5; John 16:12-15

June 22:

Isaiah 65:1-9; Psalm 22:19-28;
Galatians 3:23-29; Luke 8:26-39

June 29:

1 Kings 19:15-16, 19-21; Psalm 16;
Galatians 5:1, 13-25; Luke 9:51-62

HOME VISITS



Marijo Vik would like to have a visitation schedule for every other Sunday after worship starting May 4th.

Dates for June would be June 8 and June 22.

Please call Marijo Vik at 931-203-4106 if you want to schedule a visit from her on the dates listed.

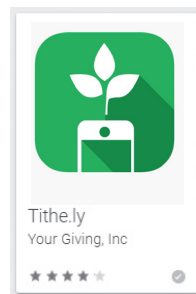
If a family member is calling for a loved one, please let them know what day Marijo is coming to visit.

Update: You now have six choices to choose from to make your donation:

- Oklee Lutheran Parish
- Parish Youth Group
- Zion Church
- Salem Church
- Zion Cemetery
- Salem Cemetery



Current leaders have stepped down effective Jan 1, 2025. If interested in serving as Youth Group leaders, please reach out to the Parish Board.



Please continue to be generous in your support!

Use the Tithe.ly app

The Link is on our website:
okleelutheran.org

or
Try our QR Code

Thank You!!



JUNE

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Birthdays

- 2: Gunnar Halverson
Bristol Vettleson
- 6: Patrick O'Neill
- 10: Chase Whalen
- 11: David Halverson
- 12: Orrin Linder
- 13: Clarence Christianson
- 18: Don Brown
Amy Parsley
- 20: Paula Christianson
- 21: Jami Hendrickson
- 25: Avery Nelson
Wayne Vettleson
- 26: Gary Rahier

Anniversaries

- 1: Sue & Jon Smith
- 2: Jami & Richard Hendrickson
- 10: Stephanie & Brent Bakken
- 19: Kaye & Tim Munt
- 24: Bonny & Lonny Cote
- 25: Patty & Eric Mickelson
- 29: Isaac & Marcella Melby

If you would like to add a birthday or anniversary, contact Bonny Cote at 218-796-4688 or email: bcote@okleelutheran.org



Time, Talents & Treasure

During this time of transition, remember that without a permanent leader, it is important for others to step up and do what needs to be done. The SAM and Pastors we have been hiring do not know all the stuff that needs to be done at our individual churches and how we have done events in the past. Please step up and use your time and talents to keep everything running smoothly and know that you all are a treasure!

okleelutheran.org

It works on your phone or computer web browser. Our website is updated every Sunday night. Check on Mondays for new announcements.

We encourage you to sign-up on our website for emails. Stay informed about upcoming events and special posts to our website. Go to the bottom of any page and look for Subscribe to our emails. Complete the form. We promise no more than 3 emails a month will be sent.

There are links to our Facebook page and YouTube channel.



Zion Sunday School graced the congregation with their beautiful voices.

Getting Ready for Confirmation at Zion



*After Church on
May 18th,
the
Graduation
and
Confirmation students
were honored at Zion.*



Avery Nelson, Parker Klasen, Taylor Moen.

Confirmation Faith Statements

Salem

Dylan Lundeen

I believe that God is the creator of all things, he is a loving, kind, and forgiving God. I believe in the power of the Holy Spirit to guide me in my daily life, I know it is always with me through every decision, hard times, and everything I do.

A parable that Jesus told in the Bible that felt related to me was Mark 4:26-29 "The Parable of the Growing Seed". It teaches that the crops grow without the farmers interruption, just the same as God can accomplish his purposes for us even when we are unaware of it happening.

A Bible verse that speaks and sticks out to me is Ecclesiastes 11:4 "He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap". This Bible verse tells me that waiting for the "perfect" moment can hold us back from taking action, we should not let the fear of failure or uncertainty prevent us from our goals. Having faith means stepping out even when things don't look certain.

Church is a place for all of us to gather, learn, and connect with God. I have grown to see this church as a great community that I feel I can come to anytime. The congregation of my church has become important in my life. I will take my membership in my church seriously and will continue to strive to be a better member as the years go on.

Isabella Mitzner

My faith is very important to me and these two things have helped my faith grow.

The first thing that has helped me are the people in my church. People in my family have been there since the beginning, when my sisters first took me with to Sunday School. I was nervous when I first got there, but the teachers were welcoming and friendly, which made it easier. They taught me a lot leading up to confirmation classes where Elaine has helped me understand Christianity in more depth.

A second thing that has helped me grow my faith is the Bible verse Isaiah 41:10. "Do not fear, for I am with you, do not be afraid, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my victorious right hand". This verse talks about God being with us through everything. It always reminds me I am not alone and always have someone who cares about me. The verse has definitely gotten me through some bad times in my life and it continues to lead me on now that I am being confirmed.

I recognize I am being confirmed and becoming an adult member of the church. I will continue to attend worship and help whenever I am able.

Carter Larson

There are several things that have contributed to my faith journey. Bible verses, Parables that Jesus told, and people that have guided me along the way.

A Bible verse that is important to me is Philippians 4:13 "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me". I know that this means that when things are hard, God will help me through and make me stronger. A hard time in my life was when my parents divorced, but God stayed with me and has made me a stronger person.

The parable of the Good Samaritan tells about an injured man that several people passed by without helping him. However, one man did stop and take care of him, even though he was a stranger. I understand that this parable Jesus told is teaching me to help others in need when I can. The feeling of needing to help others comes from the Holy Spirit which God gave me at my baptism.

Many people in my life have guided me in my faith journey. From the moment I was born, my church family has always helped me feel welcome. My Sunday School teachers, my mentor, and my confirmation teacher have taught me more in depth about how the Bible and Luther's Small Catechism pertain to my life. My mom has made sure that I have gone to church, keeping the promises from my baptism, that I would live and learn with God's people and understand and know God.

I am grateful that God has given me many people to guide me so far through my faith journey, teaching me many important Bible lessons through hearing parables and doing activities and helping me to prepare to be an adult member in the church.

Owen O'Neill

Many people have supported me through my faith journey. My parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, and great grandparents have supported me. At church my Sunday school teachers, my mentor, and confirmation teachers helped me.

A Bible verse that makes me feel supported is John 3:16 "For God so loved the world that that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life". The verse shows how much God loves us and it shows the promise of eternal life through faith.

I can relate to the "Parable of the Sower" in Mark chapter 4. My family farms and I understand how the quality of the soil affects the growth of seeds. Farmers need to plant seeds in good soil. In Mark 4:20 Jesus said, "And these are the ones sown on the good soil: they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold".

I have two goals for my life after I finish high school. One is to attend college for diesel mechanics and then hopefully take over operating the family farm. No matter what I decide to do, the Bible verse John 3:16 and the message of the "Parable of the Sower" will always go with me.

Zion

Taylor Moen

Matthew 5:16 "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven."

I picked this verse because it's important to be kind to others. Never be afraid to show the real you because God created you to be you. God is always watching and is always with you. I got baptized at Zion and I've attended Sunday school since I was 3. I learned a lot about God and his disciples' stories during those years. For the past two years I have been in confirmation class. We've talked about the Ten Commandments, Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. I also got to perform fun skits at church with the class. Last summer I was able to attend the Youth Group trip to New Orleans. It was an amazing experience and I'm so glad we were fortunate enough to go. I saw different things, met new people, and had an overall fun trip. I also learned that God created us to be, which was the theme of the gathering. That also ties into the bible verse I chose. Outside of church I enjoy traveling, playing sports, reading, listening to music, and hanging out with my friends and family. I can't wait to see how my faith journey continues to grow.

Avery Nelson

Psalm 46:5 "God is within her, she will not fall."

I picked this bible verse because it is a reminder that God is always with me and keeps me strong. Jesus is on my side and guiding me through life. This verse shows that God is with me and with God I will not fail. When I am struggling this verse helps me by showing me I am not alone, When I am worried it reminds me that God is by my side, and I shouldn't worry anymore.

I am very grateful for my confirmation experience. Many people have been with me since my baptism helping guide me through faith and deepening my understanding of the Bible. In confirmation class I learned many things about the Bible and what they mean. I am very grateful for the opportunity the church community gave me and the others to go to New Orleans. Going to the New Orleans youth gathering really helped me further my faith. I got to hear others stories of them finding their way to God. This made me realize how lucky I am to have friends and family that have been with and supporting me and my commitment to Christ throughout my life.

My faith in God helps me get through tough times. When I am worried, and nervous God helps me push through. He helps me do the right thing and strive to be better. I enjoy helping others like God has taught me to do.

Landon Klasen

I chose the bible verse Isaiah 60:22 and it reads.

"When the time is right the Lord will make it happen" This verse reminds me to always be patient.

Being a part of the church is important to me because of how God has helped me. I always like to remind myself of what God can do for me especially during sports. It always helps motivate me and being a part of the church has brought many fun things like our trip to New Orleans. In New Orleans we got to hear multiple speakers that all shared their unique journeys to finding God.

Salem Graduation Reception





Shelby Sherman, Ciara Mitzner, Kendra Christianson



Kendra Christianson was the WELCA Scholarship recipient at Salem.



Shelby Sherman, Kendra Christianson, Ciara Mitzner received Quilts from the Ladies.

June 2025						
◀ May					July ▶	
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9:00 a.m. Zion 10:30 a.m. Salem	2	3	4 7:00 p.m.Zion Council meeting	5	6	7
8 9:00 a.m. Zion 10:30 a.m. Salem	9	10 6:30 p.m. Salem Council meeting	11	12 7:00 p.m. Parish Council meeting	13	14 Flag Day 
15 Father's Day 9:00 a.m. Zion 10:30 a.m. Salem	16	17	18	19	20 Summer Solstice (Summer 	21
22 9:00 a.m. Zion 10:30 a.m. Salem	23	24	25	26	27	28
29 9:00 a.m. Zion 10:30 a.m. Salem	30		Salem Ushers June 1: Ginny S June 8: Shirley D June 15: Wyatt V June 22: Leif Kolstoe June 29: Alice Hofstad	Zion Ushers June 1: June 8: June 15: Cheryl O June 22: Patty M June 29:	Salem Altar Sandra Tougas	Zion Altar Ashley Halvorson Nancy Gunderson

The Newsletter deadline will be the first Saturday after the 15th of the month.
 Please send your contributions to Bonny by email to bcote@okleelutheran.org.
 Or call or text Bonny at 612-840-9401. Thank you!!



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Newsletter

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