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Salem English Lutheran Church

Late December 2020–January 2021

Hope Wins!



Last Sunday I didn't have a sermon to finish (or start), so on Sunday morning I was up at 4 am with "nothing" to do. So I turned on CNN and watched from inside the Pfizer warehouse in Michigan as hundreds of masked workers packaged thousands of tiny vials in dry ice and put them on a truck. I kept wondering if it was really that slow of a news day...but the more I thought about it, the more I realized that what I was witnessing was hope. They finished packing that first truck and everyone stopped for a moment to turn and watch as the engine started up. Applause broke out as the truck pulled away from the dock and **hope won**.

Then I came to church to get ready to lead worship, and I will fully admit, if it could go wrong it did. We barely held it together...but as I watched it all seemingly fall apart I remembered that pageant Sunday is always like that...a whole lot of chaos that never seems like it will work. Then I sat down to watch our kids and youth and families pull off something that had never even been dreamt up before...a virtual Christmas pageant. There were sheep and shepherds, angels and wise women, special effects, and even a brand-new baby to be baby Jesus! In a year when we thought a Christmas pageant was the far from possible...**hope won**.

Christmas is one week from today, and there are a lot of feelings to go around about the fact that we cannot do the things we want to do, or that we traditionally do every year at this time. The gatherings are cancelled – or at least look a whole lot different. Those who live alone have been alone way too long and isolation takes a toll. There is danger in the festivities we so long to be part of and the feelings of loss are real. Add to this that there is nobody to be angry at, or to blame...at least not really...because it's a virus and it doesn't care that we are angry or hurt.

On top of all these feelings about Christmas and celebrations, there is the real fact that people are hurting because businesses are closed, rent and mortgages are hard to pay if you are unemployed, and gifts for around the tree may be harder to come by than ever for some. And we cannot forget that tens of millions of our friends and neighbors have been sick and almost 310,000 people have

died...just in our country. So, if you have days when it feels overwhelming, you're not alone. These days are difficult, even for the most blessed.

And into this world...Christ is born anew...and hope wins.

But what I am realizing this week, as I watch warehouse workers ship out vaccines and watch a virtual Christmas pageant, is that Jesus doesn't do it alone. Hope doesn't just win because Christ breaks into the world. Hope wins because we follow and we live out Jesus' love and mercy and grace. ***Christmas is not just about the inbreaking of Christ in the human world, it is about the human world changing because of Christ's inbreaking.***

Hope wins because Christ is born anew...and because we live out Christ's gospel. From vaccines and pageants to the daily care we give our neighbors, hope wins when we take part in Jesus' work. We are part of the hope, all of us, especially in a time such as this.

So please, this week and beyond, will you reach out to each other? Where, and to whom, can you offer hope? And if you are in need of hope, will you reach out to me...to your church family? Jesus shows up and the world is changed...hope is born in the darkest of places. How will you be hope for the world today?

Be Well!

Pastor Rhonda



Christmas Eve Worship

Christmas Eve worship "Jazz Lessons and Carols" will be live on ZOOM and YouTube on December 24 at 4 pm. Join us for a service of lessons and carols accompanied by our resident musicians Tom Pieper and Paul Harper, and guest pianist Chris Lomheim. All the wonders of Christmas Eve right in your living room! Plus special music by members of Salem as we sing Silent Night! Grab a candle and pull up a seat as we welcome the babe in a manger who makes the world new again.

Salem News

Annual Meeting January 31 - This Year on ZOOM

This year's annual meeting will be held on ZOOM following worship on Sunday, January 31. Here is what you need to know:



- **Sunday January 31, 2020 at 10:45 am via ZOOM.**
- **All information for the meeting will be sent either in the mail or via e-mail** (the same method that you receive the Scene.) If you would prefer another method of delivery for these materials, please contact Laurie in the office by January 15.
- We will broadcast the ZOOM meeting on our YouTube channel for those who struggle with ZOOM—but interactions will only be available on ZOOM.
- Please—bring coffee and snacks, or even your lunch, as we gather after worship in fellowship and work our way into the business of the church.
- If you have been unable to connect via ZOOM, please contact the office and we will figure out a way to get you connected before the annual meeting.

While it may be an unusual way to meet for us, we are looking forward to our annual tradition of being church together at our annual meeting.

Council Corner

Highlights from December's Council Meeting Include:

- ♦ The 2021 budget is close to complete and minor changes will be entertained in January before the congregational meeting on January 31.
- ♦ Annual meeting will be at 10:45 am, immediately following worship, anticipating that there will be a ZOOM SpringHouse Ministry Center annual meeting at 12 noon.
- ♦ Watch for minutes in the eblast coming next week.



ELCA World Hunger—Good Gifts

It's NOT too late to give something unique, meaningful, and unexpected this year! The average American spends more than \$700 on Christmas gifts each year. Yet, when we think about the best gifts we have given or received, often what makes them significant is not the gift itself but the meaning behind it.

Rethink traditional gift-giving this Christmas with ELCA Good Gifts. Give a loved one a gift could change someone's life.



Give something **unexpected** this Christmas.

Go to <https://goodgifts.elca.org/> to see the entire Good Gifts Catalog and change some lives. You can also send designated donations to Salem and we will send them on to Good Gifts.



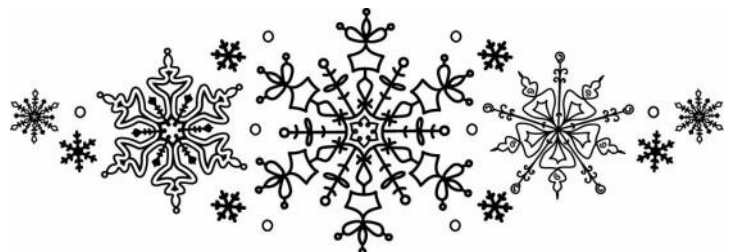
1/3—Luke 2:41-52: **Boy in the Temple**—Jesus in the temple at age twelve. He is in “his Father’s house.”

1/10—Luke 3:1-22: **Jesus’ Baptism**—John baptizes, bear fruit worthy of repentance, share what you have.

1/17—Luke 4:14-30: **Sermon at Nazareth** (Isaiah fulfilled, Elijah and widow, Elisha and Naaman).

1/24—Luke 5:1-11: **Fish for People**—Great catch of fish, Peter will fish for people.

1/31: Luke 6:1-16: **Healing on the Sabbath**—Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath (plucking grain, healing a man) and call of disciples.



More News

It Matters...Together for Joy

Some of you couldn't believe that the Pastor was giving homework along with asking for pledges, others of you took joy in answering some questions designed to remind all of us why it matters that we are together for joy. Over the next months, watch this space for some of your fellow Salemmites answers to these important questions.

It Matters...



What ways of being together as a church gives you the most joy? How has this changed this year?

"I have been reminded of how much this community and the individuals in it mean to me and how they keep me grounded in pursuing how to be a good person. It's not that I didn't realize it entirely before, but I will suddenly and unexpectedly miss them while driving my car or doing other ordinary things in my day."

"Because of hearing and vision loss, interactive ZOOM sessions, as well as on-site worship, had become very difficult. When services through YouTube (focused, unmasked, clear sound) became available, we could again worship in the Garden Sanctuary every Sunday. It feels like coming home with music, word, and Lord's supper—we "join" the musicians in receiving the bread and wine."



We Need YOUR Help!

Yes! You! We know it's getting close, but it's not too late.

Send Us a Photo of YOU!

Grab a candle and take a picture.

Take one of yourself or your whole family. (Even if you will not be able to worship with us live...we want you there!) It's simple! Grab a candle - one that you will use for candle lighting on Christmas Eve would be perfect - and take a picture. Then send it to Pastor Rhonda at revrhonda@discoversalem.org or put it in the mail as soon as possible so we get it.



Our Virtual Christmas Pageant was a success!

In spite of all the challenges, kids and families at SpringHouse came together and presented a wonderful Christmas pageant. You can see it on YouTube by going to this link: <https://youtu.be/2QX6s-GlhL8>



Bishop Ann Svenningsen Preaches December 27

Don't miss worship on December 27! Bishop Ann, of the Minneapolis Synod, will be gracing the synod with a sermon for the First Sunday of Christmas.

Sunday School, Children's Ministry, and Youth

Children's Ministry/Sunday School



Springhouse Sunday School continues to meet on Sunday mornings via our ZOOM Squiggle Space...but will take a couple weeks off for Christmas break.

They have completed the 12 week Beatitudes curriculum and this week kids WILL meet for some Christmas fun! Then they will take two weeks off. They will start up again in January with some new fun. Here's the details:

Sunday Dec. 20-Christmas Fun in the Zoom Squiggle Space!

Sunday Dec. 27-No Sunday School (winter break)

Sunday Jan. 3-No Sunday School (winter break)

Sunday Jan. 6-Sunday School resumes with a new curriculum (watch for details to come to families over break!)

Sunday School meets on Sunday mornings at 9:30 am for kids from pre-k through 5th grade. If you need a ZOOM invite, contact SpringHouse. All are welcome!

Birthdays!

Wish these Salem members and friends a happy birthday! If you're new to Salem and would like your birthday listed, please contact Laurie in the office.

Emma Anderson - 12/4

Nellie Anderson - 12/4

Shirley Bernu - 12/9

Pastor Rhonda Hlavinka - 12/11

Jill Livdahl - 12/25

Corinn Sievwright - 12/26

Quinn Livdahl - 12/29

Karen Pieper - 1/5

Ian Evans - 1/11

Mary Johnson - 1/28

Paul West - 1/31



Youth News

Thanks to all who helped make our virtual pageant a success! Have a great winter break, and stay tuned in January for news about when we will start activities again.



Poinsettias were given to beautify Salem's online Christmas worship by

Linda Hanson

In memory of loved ones

Rhonda, Bob, Clark, and Jack Hlavinka

*In memory of Jackie & Doug Buckman
(Rhonda's parents)*

Roger & Barb Livdahl

In memory of our parents

Michelle Ruppert Madsen & Chris Madsen

In honor of our families

Mary Patterson

In memory of loved ones

Sarah & Jake Sinderbrand

In honor of Kari & Tom Podenski

Reva Swanson

In honor of Sgt. Brian Soucy

Paul Wharton

In memory of Delores Kaskey Wharton



Calendar

In this disrupted time, we're doing the calendar a little differently, highlighting events that take place weekly. Be sure to check the rest of the Scene for one-time events!

Sunday

9:30 am Salem Live Stream Worship on YouTube

9:30 am Zoom Squiggle Space Sunday School

10:30 am Salem Fellowship via Zoom

Tuesday

8:15 am Lectionary Bible Study via Zoom

ZOOM Coffee Hour

Join us on Sundays at 10:30 am (or right after worship) in our ZOOM Worship Room for "Coffee Hour". This is an important time for all of us to catch up, talk about what is going on in each other's lives, and stay connected as a community. We would love to see EVERYONE there!



Let's Talk About Prayer

Welcome to the new corner of the Scene, where we will talk a little bit about prayer. This Scene's contribution is from Myra Rusten.

Life is Hard, But God is Good—Myra Rusten

In talking about prayer, and thinking about answered prayer and unanswered prayer on Zoom with people from church, this memory came to me.

I was driving home after a long day of work at the U of MN and an evening class. I was on the River Road, it was a dark winter night (must have been in the 1990's). I was tired and at a bad low. As I was driving, I was praying and talking to God about feeling sad, lonely, questioning my life's direction and tired of everything. It had not seemed lately like God was hearing me or answering my prayers. I told God I needed to hear from him.

IMMEDIATELY after saying this to God, a song came on the radio that BLEW me away. I had to pull over and park and listen and cry. I found out God can answer prayer right away. This made me feel so much better and amazed at God! The song was from Pam Thum "Life is Hard (God is Good)".

Remembering this song when I am down gives me hope and strength. I hope this helps you too.

Life is Hard (God is Good)

You turn the key, then close the door behind you,
 Drop your bags on the floor.
 You reach for the light, but there's darkness deep inside
 And you can't take it anymore
 'Cause sometimes living takes the life out of you
 And sometimes living is all you can do.
 Life is hard, the world is cold
 We're barely young and then we're old
 But every falling tear is always understood
 Yes, life is hard, but God is good



You start to cry, 'cause you've been strong for so long
 And that's not how you feel
 You try to pray, but there's nothing left to say
 So you just quietly kneel
 In the silence of all that you face
 God will give you His mercy and grace
 Jesus never said it was an easy road to travel
 He only said that you would never be alone,
 So when your last thread of hope begins to come unraveled
 Don't give up, He walks beside you
 On this journey home and He knows
 Life is hard, the world is cold
 We're barely young and then we're old
 But every falling tear is always understood
 Yes, life is hard, but God is good



610 West 28th Street
Minneapolis, MN 55408

Salem English Lutheran Church
is a Reconciling in Christ
(R.I.C.) Congregation
We are a Spirit-led, welcoming, and bold
Christian community rooted in the neighborhood,
striving to live faithfully in God's world.

612-872-4650

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|-----------------------|-----------------|---------|-----------------------|---------|-----------------------------|
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| Building Manager: | Rick Bowman | Office: | | Office: | |