

LIVING OUT GOD'S LOVE

Salem United Church of Christ is an Open and Affirming Congregation

NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2023

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR DECEMBER:

Week of December 3:

Isaiah 64:1-9

Psalms 80:1-7, 17-19

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

Mark 13:24-37

Week of December 10:

Isaiah 40:1-11

Psalms 85:1-2, 8-13

2 Peter 3:8-15a

Mark 1:1-8

Week of December 17:

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11

Psalms 126 or Luke 1:46b-55

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

John 1:6-8, 19-28

Christmas Eve | December 24:

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16

Luke 1:46b-55 or

Psalms 89:1-4, 19-26

Romans 16:25-27

Luke 1:26-38

Christmas Day | December 25

Isaiah 62:6-12

Psalms 97

Titus 3:4-7

Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20

New Year's Eve | December 31

Isaiah 61:10-62:3

Psalms 148

Galatians 4:4-7

Luke 2:22-40

FROM PASTOR PHIL

Dear Members and Friends,

Let us begin at the beginning. Advent is the beginning of the church calendar. We begin with the birth of Jesus. So, during the Sundays of Advent, we will begin with the start of our scripture.

This raises a question: what scripture is first? According to scholars, the earliest book written is likely to be the prophet Amos. (From which we got our scripture for the SALT trip this year!) In the New Testament, First Thessalonians is probably the first one written.

Of course, the book that begins the Bible if we just open it to read is Genesis. But seeing that we are beginning the Church year, we are going to have the opening of the four Gospels on each of the four Sundays in Advent.

December 3 will be Matthew 1:1-17 – a lineage of Jesus.

December 10 will be Mark 1:1-14 – the beginning of the Good News.

December 17 will be Luke 1:1-25 – the parents of John the Baptizer

And December 24, in the morning, will be John 1:1-5 and lots of Christmas Carols.

Our Christmas Eve evening service will be at 7:30 pm, and will feature Isaiah 9:2-7 and Luke 2:1-20.

We will be hearing stories that do not often get told this time of year. But they are important in the Gospels as ways of understanding who Jesus is, and how to tell the story.

Join us in person or on line and let us celebrate the season of what God has done and what God can do.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Phil



DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 2: Rhonda Blake
- 3: Maggie Groshan
- 5: Ethan Groshan, Dana Zurbuchen
- 6. Nathanael Steinagel
- 10: Heidi Grotelueschen
- 11: Brien Nechvatal
- 12: Payton Corning, Trevor Bass
- 16: Lisa Bakken
- 17: Josh Hart
- 18: Cara Bahr, Kathy Hauser
- 19: Scarlett Gauthier, Andrea Gust
- 22: Emma Hill
- 26: Chuck Hart
- 27: Barb Smith
- 31: Brandon Grotelueschen

*Let the church office know if we missed your birthday.

ADVENT MISSION OPPORTUNITY



Many of the families who visit Badger Prairie Needs Network food pantry request diapers for their infants & young children. Many of these families are low-income households who receive support from programs such as WIC and SNAP, Medicaid, etc., but none of these programs provide or cover the expense of diapers. Parents often have to decide whether to spend what little money they have on rent, food or diapers.

There are serious consequences to not having an adequate diaper supply. Health consequences, including urinary infections and serious skin rashes, can result in mounting medical costs and loss of wages, as parents miss work to care for their sick child. By providing diapers with each visit to Badger Prairie Needs Network food pantry, we alleviate some of these health issues.

The pandemic was hard on families, and inflation is causing even more hardship. During the month of October '23, Badger Prairie Needs Network served 2,447 families, a 200% increase in families served compared to October '22. Many of the 2,447 families who came to Badger Prairie Needs Network in October '23 have infants & young children who need diapers.

Badger Prairie Needs Network's partnership with The Village Diaper Bank in Madison has allowed Badger Prairie Needs Network to provide their guests with diapers and baby wipes. This partnership has allowed BPNN to provide 444 packs of diapers (25 diapers /pack) and 100 packs of baby wipes to their guests each month. All donated diapers and wipes are repackaged so all guests receive the same quantity.

With the increased number of families visiting Badger Prairie Needs Network in October '23, these 444 packs of diapers & 100 packs of baby wipes only last about 10-14 days each month. Donations of diapers, pull-ups & baby wipes have allowed Badger Prairie Needs Network to continue to provide these much needed items to the families they serve throughout the month. Especially needed are diapers in size 5, 6 & 7, pull-ups in size 2-3T, 3-4T & 4-5T, along with baby wipes.

Please consider participating in Salem's Advent Mission Opportunity by bringing size 5, 6 & 7 diapers, size 2-3T, 3-4T & 4-5T pull-ups, along with baby wipes to Salem United Church of Christ. Your donations will help support Badger Prairie Needs Network's effort to provide much needed diapers & baby wipes to the families with infants and young children that they serve. (Monetary donations are also welcome; please make your check out to Salem UCC & note BPNN Diapers/baby wipes on the check.)

SYMPATHY

To the family of **Sue Thiede**, who passed away on November 16th. A memorial service will be held on Saturday, December 9, 2023, at 11 a.m. at Salem. Visitation will be from 10 a.m. until the time of service.

DEVOTIONAL BOOKLETS

These Days, Our Daily Bread and *The Upper Room* devotional booklets are provided by the Women's Guild and available on the wall inside the main entrance to the church and in the information box near the outdoor labyrinth. Please help yourself.



WOMEN'S GUILD CHRISTMAS BAZAAR



The Women's Guild Christmas Bazaar and Raffle will be held on December 2, 2023 from 11am-1pm. We will be serving the meal of barbecue sandwiches, salads, and pies for \$8 per person. Our big prize will be a beautiful quilt made the the Salem Quilters.

A reminder that the Guild asks for donations of pies for the luncheon and goodies for the bake sale (cookies, breads, candy, etc) for all those who are able. You can bring your donations to the church on Friday morning,

December 1st, between 9 and 11 or the morning of the Bazaar. We sincerely appreciate all the help given to make this fundraiser a success.

DISHWASHER USE

Use of the dishwasher in the kitchen is encouraged whenever possible. Please note that there are detailed instructions on a laminated sheet in the cabinet to the right of the dishwasher and washing racks are located in the pantry closet. Dishes should be scraped prior to running through the dishwasher. Extra care should be taken to soak the silverware and then run them through 2 cycles – one laying flat in the washing rack and one standing up in the silverware caddy. Please inspect dishes and silverware for cleanliness before putting them away. Don't hesitate to ask if you have a question or need help with the dishwasher.

ALL IS CALM: THE CHRISTMAS TRUCE OF

The setting: The Western Front, Christmas, 1914. Out of the violence – a silence, then a song. A German soldier steps into "No Man's Land" singing Stille Nacht. This begins an extraordinary night of camaraderie, music, and peace. A remarkable true story told in the words and songs of the men who lived them.

Trevor Bass, who grew up on our congregation, is a participant in the production.

December 7-17

Thursdays and Fridays at 7:30pm

Saturdays and Sundays at 2pm

Four Seasons Theatre, The Playhouse at Overture

Tickets at overture.org or by phone at (608) 258-4141



CHRISTMAS FUND

for the Veterans Of The Cross

Over 100 years ago the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ created the Christmas Fund for the Veterans of the Cross and the Emergency Fund, to help support retired clergy, their surviving spouses, and other church workers in their retirement and active church personnel during times of emergent need.

The people of Salem have contributed to this special Christmas offering regularly for decades. We hope that those of you who are able will find it in your heart to contribute once again this year. Your contributions – labeled "Christmas Fund" or "Veterans of the Cross" – can be dropped in the offering plate at Sunday worship or sent to the church through the mail at P.O. Box 930125, Verona, 53593.

LIVING OUT GOD'S LOVE THROUGH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Sarah Pundt, Director of Christian Education
608-692-3239 or spundt@salemchurchverona.org

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Many of us have traditions of decorating our homes and Christmas trees with lights during Advent. We also light candles throughout the season in church and at home. Christ's birth is viewed as a light coming into a dark and troubled world. The above scripture from John 8:12 is not part of the birth narratives in Matthew and Luke but is something Jesus said later in his ministry when his testimony was questioned. As we move through Advent we can anticipate the bright light of peace, hope, love, and joy that baby Jesus introduces in the world; the light that Jesus later confirms and encourages us to follow.

SUNDAY SCHOOL

Sunday school is provided for all ages PreK-Adult every Sunday morning 9-10am from September 17, 2023-May 19, 2024. All volunteers who serve with our children and youth have been trained and screened through our Safe Church Guidelines. Please contact Sarah Pundt for more information.

Age Group	Location
Pre-K (age 3)-grade 5	Lower Level
Middle/High School	2nd Floor Classroom
Adults	1st Floor Conference Room

Please note that there is no Sunday school class on Dec. 24. Join us for worship at 10:15am and 7:30pm

New! Adult Class Mighty Network

The Mighty Network is a private online interactive platform that provides space for the adult class calendar, links to resources, and space for online conversations between group members. You do not need to attend the adult class to participate in this online resource and you do not have to join this online community to participate in the class. Because this network is private (just for Salem use and not intended for the general public), please contact Sarah Pundt for login information to join the group.

Topics for Adult Class

Advent Reflection

"Simply Wait: Cultivating Stillness in the Season of Advent"

Dec. 3, 10, & 17

Focus, rest, and renew spiritually throughout the Advent Season. Simple prayer practices, scripture readings, and creative reflections will help you cultivate a special time of waiting this Advent.

Love is Louder: Listening Deeply to LGBTQIA+ Experiences

Jan. 7, 14, 21, & 28

In honor of the 6th anniversary of the Salem congregation confirming its Open and Affirming Covenant, we will explore this webinar series offered through the Nurture the Soul UCC series. Part of our ONA Covenant is our pledge to continue to learn and grow in order to expand our welcome to everyone. Please join us for these important conversations.

ADVENT OPPORTUNITIES

Please help yourself to the Advent brochure available in fellowship hall.
Mark your calendars and share one with a friend!



Illuminated Advent Path Dec. 9 @ 4:30-6:30pm

Come walk the illuminated path at Salem and experience five unique stations to celebrate the promises of Advent and Christ's birth. In addition to the outdoor walking path, we will have a campfire and hot cocoa station. Indoors we will offer soup and cookies for a warm-up and program options for those unable to walk the path. Please dress appropriately for the weather and plan to walk through the grass or snow. Children and youth are invited to participate in the nativity scene hosted by the youth. All ages welcome!

Want to Help? Please contact....

Kelli Malueg maluegfamily@gmail.com to help with cookies, soup, or in the kitchen.

Sarah Pundt to help with lights or path design.



Praying Through Advent

This four-week series on Nurture the Soul will bring us deep into the Advent story, from escaping the violence of Herod, to journeying through the desert, to being left outside to give birth. Hosted by Rev. Tracy Howe and featuring guests from across the National Setting of the United Church of Christ and Local Church pastors around the country, we will consider how these stories are still unfolding in the forms of repression, migration and the housing crisis. We will join in fervent prayer, that we may be part of God's

unfolding love in this world. The final episode, on December 21st, will feature a music filled virtual worship event, featuring beloved music collective, The Many, which local churches can then download and share.

Date & Time: Nov 30, Dec 7, Dec 14, Dec 21 @ 2:30pm CT (3:30pm ET)

THE SINGULAR THEY...UNDERSTANDING GENDER IDENTITY IN TODAY'S WORLD

ONA Continuing Adult Education Jan 25 @ 6:30-8pm

Special Guest, Jeff Rabe hosted by Sarah Pundt

Using the UCC-commissioned Our Whole Lives (OWL) Sexuality Education Curriculum for Sr Adults, this program explores biological sex, gender identity, gender expression, pronouns, and sexual orientation. The program explains terms such as: cis / trans / non-binary; introduces participants to the history of the fluidity of sexuality; explores Pride Flags; and so much more! The gathering offers a safe space to ask questions, and provides tools and information to better understand, and advocate, for all of God's people.

Jeff Rabe, Director of Christian Education at First Congregational UCC in Madison, shares his 30+ years of experience in Children & Youth Ministry, and nearly 20 years as an OWL Facilitator, to share the Mission of OWL, and how it is used, for all ages, as a holistic curriculum to better understand the broad spectrum of sexuality.

SALEM YOUTH NEWSLETTER

Sarah Pundt, Director of Youth Ministry
608-692-3239 or spundt@salemchurchverona.org

December 2023

Wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

Youth Opportunities at Salem

Grades 6-12
All Are Welcome!

Youth and parents are encouraged to join our Salem UCC Youth Ministry Mighty Network. This is an online platform that allows us to have all our youth information, events, rsvp options, pictures, prayer requests, and discussions in a single place on a private network. Please contact Sarah Pundt for more information.

Youth Group

Youth grades 6-12 gather twice per month for fellowship, faith, and fun. Gatherings take place at Salem UCC unless otherwise noted. Friends are always welcome!

Knock-Knock Middle School Retreat

Salem was well represented at the WI Conference Knock-Knock retreat at Daycholah Center. Middle Schoolers: Isaac Bahr, Mira Hobson, Tucker Malueg, Eden Westphal, and Soren Winterle; High School Volunteer Mentors: Kaden Nechvatal and Blaise Westphal; Salem Leaders: Sarah Pundt and Kari Westphal; Conference Volunteer: Stefanie Steinagel; Conference Leader: Lisa Hart. We enjoyed a wonderful weekend of faith, fun, and friendship.

Upcoming Events:

Please RSVP for all events on the Mighty Network (or contact Sarah Pundt)

Youth Gathering Dec. 3 @ 6:30-7:45pm

The youth have decided to host the final station of Salem's Illuminated Advent Path. We will use our Dec. 3 gathering to plan and create our manger scene.

Illuminated Advent Path Dec. 9 @ 4:30-6:30pm

Come walk the illuminated path at Salem and experience five unique stations to celebrate the promises of Advent and Christ's birth. The youth will be hosting the final station of our path with a manger scene. In addition to the outdoor walking path, we will have a campfire and hot cocoa station. Indoors we will offer soup and cookies for a warm-up and program options for those unable to walk the path. Please dress appropriately for the weather and plan to walk through the grass or snow. All ages welcome!

Gingerbread House Making Dec. 17 @ 6:30-7:45pm

Cindy Remus has once again offered to join us and share her love of gingerbread houses. Come enjoy and evening decorating your own house to take home.



Knock-Knock Middle School Retreat

Winter Soulstice Retreat: High School and College-Age Retreat

A Winter Camp Experience @ Daycholah Center
January 26-28, 2023

Join us for an experience that transcends the ordinary—because your weekend deserves to be extraordinary. Press pause on the stress of school life and get ready for a weekend of relaxation, camaraderie with friends, and an infusion of winter camp excitement that will recharge your spirits and take your faith journey to new heights! Create a deeper connection to yourself and others through heartfelt worship and music led by Andra Moran. This event is brought to you by the Wisconsin Conference UCC Youth Faith Formation and UCCI. It's a low-key weekend where you can unwind, connect, and make some good memories. *Please contact by Dec. 20 Sarah Pundt if you are interested in attending.*

DECEMBER 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
 Give Online					1 Serve at Meals for Madison	2 11am-1pm - Women's Guild Christmas Bazaar
3 9AM - Sunday School 10:15AM - Worship 6:30-7:45PM - Youth Gathering	4 Eve - Boy Scouts	5 5:30-6:30PM - Cub Scouts	6 6PM - BRC 6:30PM - Bells 6:45PM - Chancel	7 6PM - Worship on VHAT-98	8	9 10AM - Sue Thiede visitation 11AM - Sue Thiede memorial service 4:30-6:30PM - Illuminated Advent Path
10 9AM - Sunday School 10:15AM - Worship	11 Eve - Boy Scouts	12 5:30-6:30PM - Cub Scouts 6PM - Finance 7PM - Council	13 6PM - BRC 6:30PM - Bells 6:45PM - Chancel	14 6PM - Worship on VHAT-98 6:30PM - Men's Fellowship	15	16 4PM - Piano Recital
17 9AM - Sunday School 10:15AM - Worship 2PM - Piano Recital 6:30-7:45PM - Youth Gathering	18 Eve - Boy Scouts 6-8PM - Quilt Group	19 5:30-6:30PM - Cub Scouts	20 5:30PM - BRC at Noel Manor	21 6PM - Worship on VHAT-98 JANUARY NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE	22	23
24 Christmas Eve 10:15AM - Worship 7:30 PM - Christmas Eve Service	25 Christmas Day	26	27	28	29	30
31 10:15AM - Worship						

DECEMBER NEWSLETTER 2023

WOMEN'S GUILD CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

Saturday, December 3rd
11am-1pm, raffle drawing at noon

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Sunday, December 24th
10:15am morning worship, 7:30pm evening service



ILLUMINATED ADVENT PATH

Saturday, December 9th
4:30-6:30pm

ADVENT MISSION PROJECT

Diaper and wipes drive to benefit BPNN

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An Open
and Affirming
Congregation

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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Living Out God's Love
SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

