

LIVING OUT GOD'S LOVE

Salem United Church of Christ is an Open and Affirming Congregation



NEWSLETTER | DECEMBER 2024

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR DECEMBER:

Week of December 1

Jeremiah 33:14-16
Psalms 25:1-10
1 Thessalonians 3:9-13
Luke 21:25-36

Week of December 8

Baruch 5:1-9 or Malachi 3:1-4
Luke 1:68-79
Philippians 1:3-11
Luke 3:1-6

Week of December 15

Zephaniah 3:14-20
Isaiah 12:2-6
Philippians 4:4-7
Luke 3:7-18

Week of November 22

Micah 5:2-5a
Luke 1:46b-55 or Psalm 80:1-7
Hebrews 10:5-10
Luke 1:39-45, (46-55)

Christmas Eve - December 24

Isaiah 62:6-12
Psalms 97
Titus 3:4-7
Luke 2:(1-7), 8-20

FROM PASTOR PHIL

Dear Friends,

Christmas is well known and scheduled long in advance. It is on the calendar before we open it. It is so regular that we know that sales begin in October, and Black Friday sales begin long before Thanksgiving. Was your first Christmas ad this year on the radio or TV? Mid-November, some radio stations begin 24/7 Christmas music.

But Christmas is the celebration of God breaking into our routines. Christmas is the remembrance of the coming of one who would break every chain, who would defeat empires, not with violence and the ways of empire, but with love, with healing, with compassion, with inclusion. Christmas is an over-scheduled celebration of something that catches the world off guard.

Who would think that what was needed
to transform and save the earth
might not be a plan or army,
proud in purpose, proved in worth?
Who would think, despite derision,
that a child should lead the way?
God surprises earth with heaven,
coming here on Christmas Day.
(verse 1, Who Would Think that What Was Needed)

John Bell wrote these words as part of a reimagining of worship and music in the Church of Scotland. Bell had worked in difficult and depressed neighborhoods in London. His music often tackled issues not well covered among the hymns of the church. In an interview in *Reformed Worship* from March of 1993, he said,

"I discovered that seldom did our hymns represent the plight of poor people to God. There was nothing that dealt with unemployment, nothing that dealt with living in a multicultural society and feeling disenfranchised. There was nothing about child abuse..., that reflected

Christmas Day - December 25

Isaiah 9:2-7

Psalms 96

Titus 2:11-14

Luke 2:1-14, (15-20)

Week of December 29

1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

Psalms 148

Colossians 3:12-17

Luke 2:41-52

New Year's Eve - December 31

Ecclesiastes 3:1-13

Psalms 8

Revelation 21:1-6a

Matthew 35:31-46

concern for the developing world, nothing that helped see ourselves as brothers and sisters to those who are suffering from poverty or persecution."

What if, instead of all that is commercial, Advent and Christmas were a time of the renewal of our spirits in the surprising love and interrupting hope of God in Jesus Christ? What if, in the midst of all that we are in the midst of, we found new hope, profound peace, real joy, and abiding love, in the community of faith and our ways of worshipping God and serving our neighbors.

Centuries of skill and science span the past from which we move, yet experience questions whether, with such progress we improve. While the human lot we ponder, lest our hopes and humor fray, God surprises earth with heaven, coming here on Christmas Day. (verse 3)

Just so.

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: Andrea Dettman
- 26: Chuck Hart
- 27: Barb Smith
- 31: Brandon Grotelueschen

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

DECEMBER MISSION OPPORTUNITY



Wipes and diapers aren't fun, flashy or frivolous gifts. Other items may seem more appropriate to give as a gift. For many local families struggling to provide the necessary basics for their babies and young children it is just what they want. Parents often have to decide whether to spend money on rent, food or diapers. There are health consequences that can lead to additional medical costs and lost wages due to not having an adequate diaper supply. Donating diapers and wipes

throughout the month of December will help Badger Prairie Needs Network provide these much needed items to the families they serve. Most needed items are wipes, Size 7 diapers and pull-ups in size 4-5T. Place them under the trees on the altar as gifts to the newborn king. Monetary donations are also welcome. Checks should be made out to Salem with a note for diapers/wipes.

SYMPATHY

To the family of **Clifford Hageman** (father of Ann Nelson), who passed away on October 27th. A memorial service was held on November 2 at Salem.

COUNCIL CORNER

BADGER PRAIRIE THANKSGIVING MEALS

Thank you to everyone who contributed to provide Thanksgiving meals for our neighbors in need in Dane County. Funds were donated to provide 51 meals!

Your continued generosity is a witness to the word and work of Jesus.

NOVEMBER BLOOD DRIVE RESULTS

Another good Blood Drive is in the books. One Monday, November 4, we had 32 donors check in, with 26 red blood units and 4 power red units collected.

We also had 1 first time donor!

Thank you to everyone who made this possible!

HOW TO CONTACT THE CHURCH OFFICE

Cara will continue to help with office tasks from afar until a new office administrator is hired. In the mean time, please use the following e-mail: office@saalemchurchverona.org

Cara's e-mail will eventually be deactivated.

We have much to be thankful for as we begin December and our preparations for Christmas and the New Year. Last month we had our annual meeting where we elected officers and passed the budget proposal for 2025. For this December Council Corner, I would like to recap my report from the annual meeting and thank you all for your support of Salem UCC.

We saw a great deal of change in 2024 at Salem UCC. A lot has been going on in and outside of the building and here are some of the reasons I am thankful.

Starting with the outside of the building, I am thankful for the scouts. We are continuing to develop the prairie and by way of an Eagle Scout project, 2 benches and a Blue Bird house have been added. The prairie will continue to develop and will grow and bloom as the years go by.

I am thankful for Building and Grounds committee members, Gary Nechvatal, Doug Smith, Chad Malueg and Scott Cullen.

I am thankful that we were able to consolidate our phone service to TDS and update our Elevator and Fire Systems with Midwest Alarm. In addition, we were able to replace one of our AC units which failed, and we worked with Glacier Landscaping to redo the stone wall near the office and refill and seed areas around the parking lot.

Speaking of the parking lot, I am thankful for the entire congregation's support of our Capital Campaign, which combined with a large donation enabled us to rebuild the foundation of our entire driveway and then repave and restripe it. The capital campaign will collect funding over the next two years and new donations are always welcomed. The total cost of the project was \$235,639. As of November 3, we have received 47 pledges totaling \$107,588 (\$70,883 already collected) and we have \$75,000 of matching funds from the large donation.

I am thankful for the individuals working on the Capital Campaign, who were Chris Wilbricht, Hugh Hauser, Cari Bass, George Adams, Harlan Hall, Mark Shubak and Pastor Phil.

Moving to the inside of the building, I am thankful for Krista Nechvatal and Kris Wilbricht who have been working on creating a new membership directory. They are taking on all the formatting of the directory themselves along with Julie Adams helping to take pictures.

I am thankful for the Stewardship Committee members, Hugh Hauser, Diane Triplett, Mark Shubak and Pastor Phil's, work for the 2025 funding. As of November 3, we have 45 pledges totaling \$227,276. New pledges are always welcome.

I am thankful for the Finance Committee members, Frank Westphal, Kerry Steinagel, Julie Adams, Linda Pauls, Hugh Hauser, JoAnn Aebly, who helped create the budget for 2025. Additionally, I would like to thank Linda Pauls and Julie Adams, who helped us to outsource our Accounting and Payroll systems. These changes will allow us to produce financial statements, increase our flexibility and provide for easier compliance with regulations. This will also allow Julie Adams to continue as our Treasurer without these additional burdens and provide checks and balances for the finances.

...continued from "Council Corner"

I am thankful from Frank Westphal, who has been serving as our Financial Secretary for several years now. We also have an opening for an additional person to assist Frank in this role. Please consider if you might be interested in this service and talk with Frank or any council member.

I am thankful for the Personnel Committee of Cari Bass, Kris Wilbricht and Kerry Steinagel who conducted employee reviews for Pastor Phil and Carrie Coenen.

I am thankful for the group of people that provide our sound and livestream our services. They are John Bass, Kaden Nechvatal, Brandon Grotelueschen, Doug Smith and Kevin Booth.

I am thankful for Dawn Lingard playing piano and bringing back organ music to the sanctuary and Jeffrey Phoumyvong for playing piano and joining in other musical arrangements, and for Kelly Garrow leading our choirs and starting a children's choir again, and for all the choirs, Chancel, BRC and Bells.

I am thankful for Cara Bahr, who continues to help remotely with some of the duties of the office manager as we continue to look for her replacement. I am thankful for Kris Wilbricht, who has taken on some of Cara's roles in the office.

I am thankful for the years of service given by Sarah Pundt to our Christian Education of all ages.

I am thankful for Stephanie Steinagel's work to help coordinate our Christian Education this fall.

I am thankful for Krista Nechvatal, Dave Triplett, Kathy Hauser, Stephanie Steinagel and Pastor Phil who worked as a group to fill the vacancies left by Sarah's well-earned retirement.

I am thankful that Emily Bass will be joining us, at a yet to be determined time in 2025, in charge of our Christian Education.

I am thankful for Hugh Hauser's help with the nominating committee and pleased that we can nominate Heather Toma, Chuck Hart and Karen Williams to council positions. Julie Adams to Treasurer, Frank Westphal to Financial Secretary, and Barb Smith to Council Secretary.

I am thankful for our current council members Krista Nechvatal, Kerry Steinagel, Chad Malueg, JoAnn Aebly, Kris Wilbricht. For Cari Bass, who will be council's next President and for outgoing council members Hugh Hauser and Dave Triplett.

Yes, this list of thanks is growing long, and I have not even mentioned the members of the Memorial, Mission, Planned Giving, Christian Education and Youth Ministry Teams along with the Women's Guild. I am thankful for you all!!!

Finally, I am thankful for Pastor Phil, who in addition to doing a wonderful job of preaching and leading us in worship has taken on numerous additional roles as we have been rebuilding staff positions at the church this year.

It has been a year of many changes, and I believe we are building a strong foundation for the future, and I thank you all for your support of Salem UCC!!!

John Cashman

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.

CHRISTMAS

BAZAAR

Saturday, December 7, 2024

Lunch, Bake Sale and Raffle

11:00 am - 1:00 pm

(Raffle Drawing at NOON)

Hosted By the Women's Guild of
Salem United Church of Christ

502 Mark Drive, Verona, Wi

Full Meal-\$8.00

Children (5-12)-\$3.00 Under 5 yrs - Free

Ala Carte:

Salads-\$3.00, BBQ-\$3.00, Pie-\$2.00, Beverage-\$1.00



DECEMBER 2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1 9AM - Ornaments 10:15AM - Worship 5:30PM - Advent by Candlelight	2 Eve - Scouts	3 Eve - Scouts	4 6PM - BRC 6:30PM - Handbells 6:45PM - Chancel	5	6 10AM-2PM - Serve at Meals for Madison	7 11AM-1PM - Women's Guild Christmas Bazaar
8 9AM - Sunday School 10:15AM - Worship 1PM - Music Recital	9 Eve - Scouts	10 Eve - Scouts 6PM - Finance 7PM - Council	11 6PM - BRC 6:30PM - Handbells 6:45PM - Chancel	12	13	14 4PM - Piano Recital
15 9AM - Youth Choir 10:15AM - Worship (Christmas Music)	16 Eve - Scouts	17 Eve - Scouts	18 6PM - BRC 6:30PM - Handbells 6:45PM - Chancel	19	20	21
22 9AM - Adult Sunday School 10:15AM - Worship 5PM - Youth Gingerbread Houses JANUARY NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE	23	24 7:30PM - Christmas Eve Candlelight Service	25 Christmas Day	26	27	28
29 10:15AM - Worship	30	31				

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WOMEN'S GUILD CHRISTMAS BAZAAR

Saturday, December 7rd
11am-1pm, raffle drawing at noon

CHRISTMAS EVE SERVICES

Sunday, December 24th
7:30pm candlelight service

ADVENT MISSION PROJECT

Diaper and wipes drive to benefit BPNN

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Director of Handbells:

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Church Council President:

John Cashman

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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OF CHRIST**

