

LIVING OUT GOD'S LOVE

Salem United Church of Christ is an Open and Affirming Congregation

NEWSLETTER | August 2024

Water Lilies at Olbrich Botanical Gardens, Cara Bahr

SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR AUGUST:

Week of August 4

2 Samuel 11:26
12:13a and Psalm 51:1-12
Exodus 16:2-4, 9-15 and
Psalm 78:23-29
Ephesians 4:1-16
John 6:24-35

Week of August 11

2 Samuel 18:5-9, 15, 31-33 and
Psalm 130
1 Kings 19:4-8 and Psalm 34:1-8
Ephesians 4:25-5:2
John 6:35, 41-51

Week of August 18

1 Kings 2:10-12; 3:3-14 and
Psalm 111
Proverbs 9:1-6 and Psalm 34:9-14
Ephesians 5:15-20
John 6:51-58

Week of August 25

1 Kings 8:(1,6,10-11), 22-30, 41-43
and Psalm 84
Joshua 24:1-2a, 14-18 and
Psalm 34:15-22
Ephesians 6:10-20
John 6:56-69

FROM PASTOR PHIL

The Complicated Good

A recent conversation reminded me that doing good in the world is complicated. It is tempting to think right and wrong are simple and that “the good” is easy to do. I know as a preacher it can be easier to say “do good” than to offer a sense of the nuance of what it means, both in terms of the difficulties it may require us to face, and how much we have to think about the consequences, intended and unintended, of what we do.

For example, I now drive a plug-in hybrid car. It gets much better gas mileage than the car I used to drive, which got better gas mileage than the car I drove before that. It puts out less exhaust than my previous car. It has other advantages, like it is bigger than my previous, much smaller vehicle. Now there is room for all our stuff for family vacations, and I am no longer doing yoga to enter and exit my vehicle.

But the electricity that charges the battery still comes from sources that are not as environmentally good as they could be. Nor do I have many opportunities to carpool. The individual car is a way of life for many of us. So, this example is a small, individual step in what is a much larger, global problem. I cannot solve all of it on my own, but I can take steps that do what good I can.

But even in the face of so many complications, it is still important for us to do what good we can. This reminded me of two quotes that offer grace for us as we seek to do good in a complicated world. And they speak to how we can live out God's love as a church.

The first is by poet Maya Angelou. “Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better.”

The second is by theologian Reinhold Niebuhr.

“Nothing that is worth doing can be achieved in our lifetime; therefore we must be saved by hope.

Nothing which is true or beautiful or good makes complete sense in any immediate context of history; therefore we must be saved by faith.



AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

- 4: Colleen Bass
- 5: Madeline Moll
- 7: Debbie Bass
- 8: Owen Luginbuhl
- 13: Gladys Schmid
- 14: Blake Adams
- 15: Isaac Bahr
- 16: Katherine Shubak
- 17: Michael Fiez
- 22: Dawn Lingard
- 23: Verlis Luchsinger
- 27: Lena Woodis
- 29: Melissa Remus
- 30: Heidi Hodel
- 31: Krista Nechvatal

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

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

The men of the church are invited to gather for dinner and fellowship on Thursday, August 8th at 6:30PM at the home of Jon Pundt.

Nothing we do, however virtuous, can be accomplished alone; therefore we must be saved by love.

No virtuous act is quite as virtuous from the standpoint of our friend or foe as it is from our standpoint. Therefore we must be saved by the final form of love which is forgiveness."

Just so.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Phil

COUNCIL CORNER

I have been thinking of the many blessings of life that are mixed in with all the other things that give pause and concern. The blessings always seem to overcome the concerns when you look at the present moment and the beauty of the new morning. I hope that your summer has brought you joy.

By the time you read this you should have gotten a letter introducing the capital campaign to help fund the replacement of our badly deteriorating parking lot. Please prayerfully consider your ability to help. Work should begin on the parking lot in September. There will be more information coming in the months ahead about the campaign and stewardship for 2025.

The Council and the Finance Committee are beginning to look at our current budget and plan for next year. We have been blessed with a generous donation to Salem's general fund. We are also continuing to feel a deficit in income versus expenses. As of the end of June there is approximately \$144K in income and \$165K in expenses. Please consider this as you think about the general stewardship fund.

The nominating committee will be working to fill 3 council positions for 2025 along with the role of Treasurer and Financial Secretary. Please consider if one of these roles would be something you would consider and reach out to a council member if you have any questions.

Regarding staffing, we are actively recruiting to fill the two roles in Christian Education and the Office Administrator position. Work also continues on a new church directory, the community garden is growing, and the prairie is seeded and, though it will take a while to evolve, it is on its way forward.

The Salem Church Council wishes you well as you move forward in your life and thanks you for your support of Salem UCC.

John Cashman

BLOOD DRIVE

Salem will host a blood drive through the Red Cross on August 19 from 1:30-5:30PM. We are seeking volunteers to welcome and check people in as well as provide goodies for blood donors.

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@salemchurchverona.org

Cara's e-mail will eventually be deactivated.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Salem is seeking candidates for staff positions of Office Manager, Director of Christian Education, and Director of Youth Ministries. If you know of someone who might be a good fit, please send them to our website where they can learn more and can submit a resume.

THANK YOU FROM THE BAHR FAMILY



We would like to thank you for the lovely send off we recieved on July 21 following worship. An extra thanks to Rose Wieland who provided much of the food. We appreciate each of you and the gifts for our new home. We will always cherish the many memories we have made with our church family over the last 14 years and we will miss you so much.

Cara especially would like to thank Salem for the oppportunity to serve as office administrator. The experience has been fulfilling and came at a time when it was really needed. I began working in the office around the first anniversary of our daughter's birth/death and it gave me something meaningful to focus on. I have enjoyed serving the church for the last 8 years and will miss doing so in the future. I also want to thank you for allowing for flexibility within my job over the years as we have added to our family. I value the time I have been able to be at home with the kids and they have enjoyed the times when they could come with me to the office.

Though we are officially moving August 3, you haven't completely gotten rid of me yet. I will continue to help as much as I can from afar to bridge the gap until a new office administrator can be found.

Love, The Bahr Family (Cara, Nathan, Isaac, Aayla, Ephraam and Machai)

LIVING OUT GOD'S LOVE THROUGH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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

Dear Salem Family,

Effective July 31, I have retired from my roles as Director of Christian Education and Youth Ministry at Salem UCC. I will continue to be a part of the Salem community, though I will keep a low profile for an extended period as I adjust to my new employment status. I also want to allow room for my successor to develop their own ministry. The church council is currently working diligently to fill my position(s) as quickly as possible with the right candidate.

Thank you for the privilege of serving as your Director of Christian Education for the last 7+ (almost 8!) years. I have grown as a person and as a Christian through providing this ministry. My relationships within the church have blossomed and I am grateful for expanding my Salem family in this way. I have also become more familiar with the WI Conference UCC, and the Verona and Madison communities. These relationships have enriched my life and my work, and I am beyond grateful. As I prepare to return to my church pew as "just Sarah, church member" I am feeling compelled to leave you with some final thoughts.

Build Your House on a Rock

Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. (Matthew 7:24)

Through these last 7 years, I have strived to provide you with opportunities to grow in your understanding of the Christian faith and learn more about how to nurture your own faith. I have walked alongside you and learned so much about myself and my own faith life in the process. I encourage you to explore new ways of understanding your Christian faith as a blueprint for understanding yourself and how you interact with the world at large. Cultivate learning opportunities within Salem, explore online offerings through the UCC, and continually reach out to the community for external resources to learn and grow. The world is increasingly challenging and uncertain. Build your spiritual house on a rock and you will weather these storms.

Identify and Use Your Spiritual Gifts

Each of you should use whatever gift you have received to serve others, as faithful stewards of God's grace in its various forms. (1 Peter 4:10)

Each one of you is special. God needs you to use your spiritual gifts for the benefit of others and the world. Spend time discerning your gifts and then have the courage to live out these qualities deeply and fully. In these actions, your relationship with God, yourself, and others will grow in ways you never imagined.

Live in Community

And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another. (Hebrews 10:24-25)

We are meant to live in community. Through community, we support and learn from each other. We can also accomplish more together than we can on our own. We need to actively cultivate community within our church family but also with those who are outside of our church walls. Through my work at Salem, I have become much better acquainted with so many of you. I highly encourage you to cultivate new relationships within the Salem congregation. Sit in a different pew and introduce yourself to the person next to you, challenge yourself to greet new people during fellowship time, or participate on a new church committee. Our community will grow stronger as we develop these bonds. Cultivate new ways for Salem to be a strong part of the community at large. We need to continue to push outside our walls and connect with the Verona community and beyond. The Illuminated Advent Path and the Nothing to Hide exhibit are examples of drawing people in. Volunteering at BPNN or FB4K and co-hosting community VBS are ways we can spread God's love out into the world. Constantly be on the lookout for ways to bring people into our midst, or for ways to take Salem out to others further away from us.

SALEM YOUTH NEWSLETTER

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

August 2024

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

SALT ALT Trip 2024

Our SALT Trip to St. Louis was a great success! 10 youth and 4 adults traveled to the AMEN! House affiliated with Oak Hill Presbyterian Church in St. Louis. The group did a lot of serving and learning, faced challenges, laughed together, and enjoyed some local fun.



Salem Youth with our AMEN! guides

Sam Shubak, Blaise Westphal, Tucker Malueg, Eden Westphal, Mira Hobson, Lars Winterle, Isaac Bahr, Millie, Lucie, Soren Winterle, Owen Luginbuhl, Kaden Nechvatal

Thank you, Chaperones!

Heartfelt thanks to our chaperones Gary Nechvatal, Krista Nechvatal, and Kari Westphal. Your love, care, efforts, and leadership provided the backbone for an incredible SALT Trip experience. As the leader, I could not have done this without your steadfast help. Thank you for blessing our youth by serving in this way. ~Sarah Pundt

Dear Salem Youth,

As you know, I retired from my role as Director of Youth Ministry at Salem on July 31. Working with you has been one of my life's greatest gifts. When I graduated college in upstate NY, I never would have believed that I would someday be leading a Youth Ministry in WI. I lived in Rochester, NY my whole life, studied music in college, and found a job at a bank. I know that none of that makes sense or flows! Please remember my story when your life takes you on journeys that you didn't plan or expect. It's important to have goals and strive for them, but always remember to leave room for the Holy Spirit to direct you somewhere you never thought you needed to go.

I am so glad that I had the courage to say yes to the call to serve with you at Salem. I did not know how much I needed to spend this time with you. Each of you fill me with hope and joy by your care for each other and the world, and with your eager desire to serve others. You have unique gifts that you bring to the world and my wish is that shine your light brightly for the benefit of others. Know your value, use your voice to speak out, ask for help when you need it, and mostly, please always remember how much God loves you. You are special, unique, and truly valued. I will cherish my memories of time spent with you and the things that I have learned from you.

Many Blessings,
Sarah Pundt

AUGUST 2024

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|----------------------------|--|----------------------------|-----------|---|---|-----------|
| | | | | 1 6PM - Worship on VHAT-98 | 2 10AM-2PM - Serve at Meals for Madison | 3 |
| 4 9AM - Worship | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 6PM - Worship on VHAT-98 6:30PM - Men's Fellowship @ Jon Pundts home | 9 | 10 |
| 11 9AM - Worship | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 6PM - Worship on VHAT-98 | 16 | 17 |
| 18 9AM - Worship | 19 1:30-5:30PM - Red Cross Blood Drive | 20 7PM - Council | 21 | 22 6PM - Worship on VHAT-98 SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE | 23 | 24 |
| 25 9AM - Worship | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |

AUGUST NEWSLETTER 2024

MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

Thursday, August 8 at 6:30pm

RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

Monday, August 19, 1:30-5:30pm

SALEM CHURCH STAFF:

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www.salemchurchverona.org

Pastor

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Church Council President:

John Cashman

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

