



Living out God's Love

Salem United Church of Christ is an Open and Affirming Congregation
NEWSLETTER | NOVEMBER 2025

A message from Pastor Phil

Scripture Readings for NOVEMBER

November 9

Job 19:23-27a

Luke 20:27-38

November 16 - Totenfest

Revelation 7:9-17

Matthew 5:1-12

November 23 - Reign of Christ

Jeremiah 23:1-6

Luke 23:33-43

November 30 - First Sunday of Advent

Isaiah 2:1-5

Matthew 24:36-44

Dear Members and Friends,

I recently heard a description of generative AI that helps me make sense of it. Training AI requires devouring millions of examples of writing and artwork. But what it produces is not necessarily the right answer. Instead, it is designed to give something that looks like what you expect the answer to look like.

(That it has used so many people's writings and artwork without attribution or compensation is problematic and unethical. But that is not the point here.)

This means that it does not necessarily give correct information, but it can make it look convincing. People who have used it for research have discovered that it will cite studies that do not exist, as if they were written by people who do exist.

It is the definition of facade. It has the veneer of authenticity, even formatting things as if real research had been done. It provides answers that might pass the sniff test, but any digging deeper or critical thinking shows it to be "all hat, no cattle," as they used to say when I was in Texas.

In the season of Thanksgiving, this got me thinking about authenticity. When the New Testament describes what blooms and flourishes when the Holy Spirit is present, it says that the fruit of the Spirit is *love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control*. (Galatians 5:22-23) These are qualities that require authenticity. These are not veneer traits. They require some depth of soul, some centeredness of spirit. (See Emily Bass's article in this newsletter about the importance of contemplation and depth of being present to meet the challenges of our day.)

As we give thanks, whatever form that might take, may we do so with authenticity. And may we experience love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control, in the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Phil

This month's HIGHLIGHT EVENTS

November 5

Caring Community

November 16

Annual meeting and potluck
following worship

November 29

Holiday church decorating

November 30

Advent by Candlelight

Faith Formation

Dear Salem Family,

Recent studies continue to affirm what mystics, monks, and poets have long known: contemplative practices shape us for flourishing. In a recent episode of *To the Best of Our Knowledge* on human flourishing, researchers described how meditation, prayer, and mindful attention help us grow in compassion, emotional regulation, and joy. These practices don't remove the pain or uncertainty of our times. They root us more deeply within them. They allow us to hold the ache and the beauty at once, to be more fully human, and to encounter God not above or beyond, but within and among us.

At Contemplative Community, which continues each Friday evening at 6:30PM, we practice just that. Together we create a space to breathe, to listen, and to remember that even now, perhaps especially now, the Spirit moves through the ordinary rhythms of our lives: the flicker of a candle, the shared silence, the turning of seasons.

But what happens when *the ordinary* feels absent? When the familiar patterns of life, community, or faith shift beneath our feet? How do we stay connected to God and one another in times of disorientation or uncertainty?

This **Advent**, we'll explore these questions through Francis Weller's book, *In the Absence of the Ordinary: Soul Work for Times of Uncertainty*. Our time together will be part book discussion and part experiential practice, an invitation to dwell with mystery, grief, and wonder in ways that open us more deeply to the sacred presence that abides even when so much feels undone.

Our journey begins Sunday evening, November 16th (online) and continues throughout Advent. We'll conclude our exploration on the Winter Solstice, the longest night of the year, with a shared meal at Salem, gathered in the glow of candlelight and community. For more information about this offering, including how to sign up, please see the insert in the newsletter.

Our **Sunday morning Faith Formation hour at 9AM** will continue this theme as well learning and engaging spiritual practices that nurture grounded presence and resilient hope.

- November 2 - Crying Out and Lament
- November 9 - Confessing
- November 16 - Celebrating! (Intergenerational Faith Formation Hour)
- November 23 - Walking Together
- November 30 - Studying the Word

On November 16th, the day of Totenfest, Annual Meeting, and the beginning of *In the Absence of the Ordinary*, (all community building events!) our youth will also gather at 6:00PM-8:30PM. We will watch the film *Lilies of the Field* (1963) and *build* our own "shapel." Come to the Youth Gathering to find out what exactly that means!

For our middle school youth, the ***Knock Knock Retreat* will take place November 21–23** at the Daycholah Center. This retreat is always a highlight of the year, a time for laughter, faith exploration, and building friendships rooted in the love of God. If you're in middle school and would like to attend, please let me know! In all these ways, through silence and story, through study and shared meals, through prayer and play, we are being formed. Even in times of uncertainty, perhaps especially then, we are invited to remember: God is here, in the breath, in the pause, in the community gathered and becoming.

Peace and blessings,

Emily, Director of Faith Formation

faithformation@saalemchurchverona.org

In the Absence of the Ordinary

Advent invites us to slow down, listen deeply, and prepare our hearts for the coming of light in the midst of darkness. This year, we will journey together with Francis Weller's In the Absence of the Ordinary: Soul Work for Times of Uncertainty. Through weekly readings and shared spiritual practices, we will explore themes of grief and resilience, tending the soul, and finding medicine for the long dark. All gatherings except the final gathering will be held online. Join us as we explore ways to be in this world when the ordinary feels absent.

DATES

NOV 16 4-6PM online
NOV 30 *2-4PM online
DEC 7 4-6PM online
DEC 14 4-6PM online

DEC 21 4-7PM in person

Hosted by:
Salem UCC with shared meal

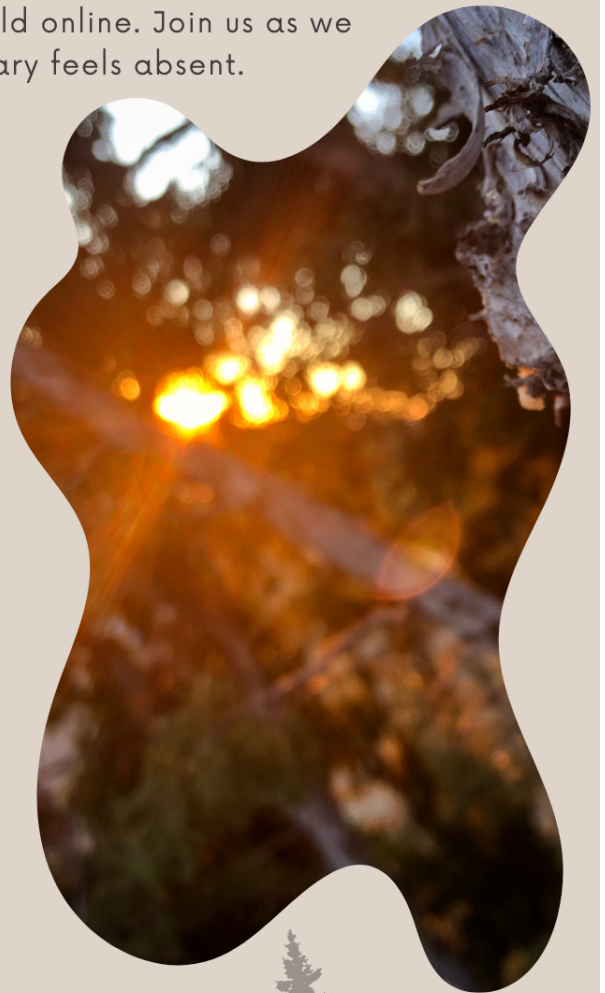
SIGN UP BY NOVEMBER 10

**SCAN THE QR CODE BELOW
TO SIGN UP**



**QUESTIONS?
CONTACT THE
ORGANIZER**

Emily Bass
faithformation@salemchurchverona.org
505-310-7200





Sunday, December 21
Celebrating Christmas through
Music

Hallelujah Shadow Nativity

On Sunday, December 21st during worship, our children and youth will share the story of Christmas using light and shadow. This performance will be set to the tune of Hallelujah.

Rehearsals will begin on Sunday, November 16th during Faith Formation hour (9AM) and will continue until December 21st. If any children or youth are interested in helping to share the Christmas story in this way, please let Emily know. We need at least 14 people to make this performance come to light (or shadow :) If you have an idea of what part you'd like to play, please let Emily know and she will do her best to honor the request.

On Sunday, November 30th during our Faith Formation hour, we will be making the figures for the shadow nativity and creating mini shadow nativities of our own to take home. If we run out of time, we can continue this activity during Fellowship Hour.

Click [here](#) to watch: **Hallelujah Shadow Nativity video**

Council Corner

ANNUAL MEETING & POTLUCK – SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 16

Mark your calendars for Sunday, November 16, when we'll gather for our Annual Meeting following worship. Before we get down to business, we'll share in a church potluck and a chance to enjoy good food and even better company.

Our Annual Meeting is an important moment in the life of our church community. Together, we'll reflect on all that has happened since last November and look ahead to what's next. During the meeting, we will:

- **Vote in new officers** and welcome new members to three key committees,
- **Review and discuss** the proposed budget for the coming year, and
- **Celebrate** the ministries and milestones that have shaped our shared life together.

At Salem UCC, we believe that everyone's voice matters. The work of the church belongs to all of us—and none of it can happen without your presence and participation. So come, share a meal, and take part in shaping the future of our ministry together.

Cari Bass, Council President

Caring Community - November 5

Caring for one another is one of the hallmarks of being the church. To help do this, we will be starting a Caring Community group at Salem. **Join us at 1 pm on Wednesday, November 5** at the church. We will be looking at ways of reaching out to people who cannot make it to church, or members and friends of Salem who are having health issues or going through surgery. We will brainstorm other ways we might be the church for one another. No experience necessary. Bring your ideas and questions. Compassion and curiosity are all we need. **Please let Pastor Phil know if you plan on attending.** See you there!



Advent By Candlelight

All are welcome on **Sunday November 30th, 2025 at 5:30 pm.** This is a night out for reflection and quiet preparation for the Advent season. Enjoy soup, bread, dessert, music and an inspirational message. This is a free event but we need to know the number attending to plan accordingly. Please RSVP by signing up on the poster in fellowship hall by Sunday November 23rd, 2025. We will also need volunteers to provide food. Feel free to invite your family and friends.

TABLE HOSTS WANTED: We are looking for individuals or teams to be "Table Hosts" for this special Salem event.. Hosts' duties include decorating and setting a table for 6-8 guests with a theme/color of your choice. Table cloth, place setting of silver, crystal or paper? - you decide! And of course candles (necessary to set the mood). Please consider glass hurricanes for safety or even battery operated candles.

Themes are endless, all we ask is that it stays within the Advent theme. All will be invited to admire the tables before dinner and the formal program begins.

Feel free to invite family, friends and neighbors to be guests at your table. If you are interested in being a "table host" please contact Cindy Remus or Kris Wilbricht or **sign up on the poster in fellowship hall.**

Coming Next Month...

ALL CHURCH BAZAAR

Salem will be having the Christmas Bazaar and raffle on **December 6th from 11:00 am to 12:30 pm.** We will be serving a meal of barbecue sandwiches, salads and pies for \$10.00 per person.

A reminder that we are asking for a pie from each family 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 5th between 9 and 11:00 or the morning of the bazaar.

Our big prize will be a beautiful quilt made by the Salem Quilters for the raffle. Please have donated prizes for the raffle to Cindy Remus by Wednesday December 3rd. Raffle tickets will be on sale soon.

This is an all church fundraiser and we sincerely appreciate all the help given to make this fundraiser a success.



Mission Opportunities

Neighbors In Need

The congregation missed the opportunity to provide financial support to the Neighbors in Need special offering this fall. The mission committee has decided to allocate \$325 of their budgeted funds to support this important special offering of the United Church of Christ. Last year members of the congregation contributed \$400. **If members of the congregation would like to contribute to supplement the mission funds, please make a special note when donating. All contributions will be sent at the end of November.**

Neighbors in Need is one of the *four* special offerings of the UCC. It supports ministries and programming of justice and compassion throughout the United States.

One-third of these funds support the Council for American Indian Ministry. Two-thirds benefit the UCC's justice and witness ministries to support justice initiatives and advocacy efforts as well as grants for direct service projects.



Neighbors in Need

Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.
-Galatians 6:2



Thanks to our team who participated in the recent **Madison Area Crop Walk** hosted by First Congregational UCC. The CROP Hunger Walk is a nationwide movement sponsored by Church World Service to raise funds to end hunger and poverty in the U.S. and around the world.

Pictured: JoAnn Aebly, Cindy Remus, Diane Triplett, Dave Triplett, Lisa Hart, Gary Aebly, and Keri Westphal

NOVEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 1 Jared Zurbuchen
- 1 Soren Winterle
- 2 Dana Zurbuchen
- 2 Matthew Gust
- 5 Jackson Pundt
- 5 Sam Shubak
- 8 Susan Hageman
- 18 Laura Williams
- 19 Gary Butzlaff
- 24 Nan Zurbuchen
- 26 Bruce Quade

*Please let us know if we
missed your birthday!*

Bags, Anyone?

Badger Prairie Needs Network would like your paper and plastic bags. Please bring any extras that you have to church and place them in the bin at the back of the fellowship hall. Paper bags are most needed but plastic bags are also appreciated for items the clients pick up in the lobby.



Have some news to share?

Please submit December newsletter
items by November 23rd to:

office@salemchurchverona.org

Pictures are always welcome too!



Faith Formation 9:00am - Sundays
Worship 10:15 am - Sundays

NOVEMBER 2025

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1 9:00-11:00 am Crafting Community 11:30-12:30 pm BPNN Community Meal
2 9:00 am Faith Formation 10:15 am Worship 6-7:30 pm Confirmation	3 6:15-8:30 Scouts	4 6-7:30 Scouts	5 1:00 Caring Community 6-7:00 Scouts 6:00 BRC rehearsal 6:30 Handbell practice 7:00 Chancel rehearsal	6	7 6:30 pm Contemplative Community	8 9:00-11:00 am Crafting Community
9 9:00 am Faith Formation 10:15 am Worship <i>1:30 Off Beat Music Recitals</i>	10 6:30-8:30 Scouts	11 Veterans Day 6-7 Scouts 6 pm Finance Mtg 7 pm Council Mtg	12 6:00 BRC rehearsal 6:30 Handbell practice 7:00 Chancel rehearsal	13	14 6:30 pm Contemplative Community	15 9:00-11:00 am Crafting Community 11:30-12:30 pm BPNN Community Meal
16 9:00 am Hallelujah Rehearsal 10:15 am Worship-Totenfest 11:15 ANNUAL MEETING / Potluck 4-6 In the Absence of the Ordinary (online) 6-8:30 Youth Gathering	17 6:30-8:30 Scouts	18	19 6:00 BRC rehearsal 6:30 Handbell practice 7:00 Chancel rehearsal	20	21 Knock Knock Middle School Retreat 6:30 pm Contemplative Community	22 Knock Knock Middle School Retreat 9:00-11:00 am Crafting Community
23 Knock Knock Middle School Retreat 9:00 am Hallelujah Rehearsal 10:15 am Worship	24 DEADLINE for December newsletter articles 6:30-8:30 Scouts	25	26 6:00 BRC rehearsal 6:30 Handbell practice 7:00 Chancel rehearsal	27 Thanksgiving Day	28 6:30 pm Contemplative Community	29 9:00-11:00 am Crafting Community Holiday Church Decorating
30 9:00 am Hallelujah Shadow activity 10:15 am Worship 2-4 In the Absence of the Ordinary (online) 5:30 Advent by Candlelight	1	2	3	4	5	6 11:00-12:30 Church Bazaar

Salem church staff and Contacts:

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

