



Salem

United Methodist Church
Forecaster

Pandemic Plans

**We miss being together.
When will we gather in-person?**

This has been tough for all of us. We are living through the worst health disaster in a hundred years. But this too shall pass and we will certainly gather in-person again. Don't lose faith, hope, or love. There is light at the end of the tunnel!

Salem is following the Iowa Conference's guidelines which have come from health professionals. The key metric we're watching is the 14 day test positivity rate and whether it is above or below 15% in our county. When it is above 15%, health professionals have asked that we not gather in groups larger than 10. When it drops below 15%, the Conference suggests moving into a cautionary phase which may include in-person activities and then, following that, in-person worship gatherings with appropriate safety protocols of masking, physical distancing and other recommended safety procedures.

One difficulty is that there are multiple resources and they each figure metrics a bit differently. When the Leadership Board met last, the lowest percentage reported was over 17% (the highest was 23%). Since then the positivity rate has decreased! The Leadership Board plan is to continue watching the 14

day positivity rate reported from all sources and see whether it continues to go down or whether there will be further problems, for example with the new virus strains. Hopefully, the COVID vaccinations will roll out more quickly, people will get the vaccine when offered, and the positivity rate will continue to trend downward. If so, we could begin small groups in-person at the church in February or March and then prepare for in-person worship gatherings, though we could begin first with parking lot gatherings (drive-in church) rather than inside the building.

Nearly 4500 people have died from this in Iowa, nearly 420,000 in our country. Over 300,000 have tested positive in Iowa, and many of those, even if they weren't originally very sick, continue to have significant issues with lungs, heart, brain, and taste/smell. Salem has made sacrifices so that we might follow Jesus' command to love our neighbors. Loving our neighbors means protecting them the best we can by wearing masks, keeping physical distance, and not gathering in small or large groups.

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*due to the COVID-19 pandemic Salem continues to offer online worship only



First of All, Pray



John Louk, Pastor

please pray
for our
country's
leadership

The Apostle Paul tells Timothy in his New Testament letter to pray for kings and all who are in high positions (1 Timothy 2:1-2). As I write this, President Joe Biden and Vice-President Kamala Harris were inaugurated a week ago. That means it's time to pray for them. I can tell you that some in our congregation are thrilled with the new administration. Some are not. That's not the point. This scripture instruction isn't about whether we support the politics of the ruler.

Think of our Christian brothers and sisters around the world in places like Vietnam, or China, Cuba, North Korea, the Sudan. They too are urged to pray for all with governmental authority, all who are in high positions. Vietnam is one of the countries where persecution of Christians is most severe.

Once, Vietnamese authorities in a province incited a mob to burn down the home of Christian evangelist, Dinh Van Hoang, because he wouldn't sign a paper denying his Christian faith. Pastor Hoang was taken to jail.

When he was released from jail, Pastor Hoang was greeted warmly by the people of his church. It was a time of joy and celebration. They hugged and cried and left to go to the home of one of his parishioners. They didn't know that they were followed.

Safe inside the home, the joy turned to consternation, to anger at the way their pastor had been treated. They complained about the way Christians were treated in Vietnam, how the government set out to destroy them. Pastor Hoang held up his hand: he said, remember what we learn in scripture, we are to pray for all people, especially our president and secretary-general of the communist party.

Some asked, "How could we do that!?" Pastor Hoang said, Jesus tells us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us.

That night, about 10 PM, they were in the midst of a prayer service. They had just prayed for everyone they could think of,

but especially for the president and secretary-general of the communist party in Vietnam. Suddenly the door exploded, windows crashed. Police and dogs rushed in. In the pandemonium, the authorities began swinging clubs and beating everyone inside—men, women, and children. Pastor Hoang and the home owner were beaten severely and then hauled out and taken to jail again. Others began running away.

A short distance away, two women stopped running, breathing hard. They were terrified and bruised and bleeding. Their eyes were wide with shock. One of them said, what should we do? And the other said, first, we will pray. Under the cover of darkness, they trembled as they clung to one another and they began to pray. First they prayed for the president and secretary-general of the communist party in Vietnam.

When Paul wrote to Timothy to remind him that Christians pray for kings and everyone in high positions, he was writing to people who lived under the yoke of foreign power, who faced persecution by those same people in authority. His words were shared with churches in areas that had more in common with Vietnam or Iran today than with us.

That's the very specific reason we are to pray for those in authority—*so that we may lead quiet and peaceable lives in all goodness and dignity*. So let us pray for the Biden-Harris Administration so that we all may have stability in our lives and peaceful living. That's the *shalom* Salem is working for: peace, wholeness, completeness, health, well-being, joy, beauty, friendship, salvation.

Yes, there are problems. People lie, cheat, steal, betray, speak evil, carry out injustice and oppression. We still have a pandemic. There's a lot that needs to be fixed. It's a big job. You might not know where to start. First of all, pray.

Grace and peace to you,

John Louk

February Worship — *Story Church* and Lent

In February *Story Church* culminates on Transfiguration Sunday (February 14). Then the season of Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, February 17 with a special online worship service premiering at 7 PM.

The Lenten worship series is *Songs of the Heart*. Music transports us through time and space in a matter of seconds. Songs inspire, challenge, encourage, and comfort us. This series is a look at a number of songs (Psalms) written by people just like us. They didn't win a Grammy or top the charts, but they have the power to transform our lives!

Like Advent, Lent is a season of preparation. The origins of Lent lie in the preparation for baptism on Easter. "At the heart of the Christian faith is our participation in the life, suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ as Lord...In remembering the mystery of our redemption in Christ through the seasons of Lent and Easter, we are formed in the pattern of his death and resurrection and his life-giving Spirit" (*The New Handbook of the Christian Year*, p. 105-106).

Worship continues to be offered online only in the midst of the pandemic. Our online worship, available on demand anytime during the week, premieres live at 9:30 AM on Sunday mornings on Facebook, YouTube, and our website. The links are www.facebook.com/salem.cr, www.salemchurch.life, and <http://youtube.com/channel/UCnWq4K2wc3F0nmk8h9y8Xjw>. Please subscribe to our YouTube channel so we can get an easier link (we need 100). Click on the YouTube link above and hit the red SUBSCRIBE button next to our name. (If you don't already have a YouTube account, you will need to create one.)

Please let us know if you have any questions, and if you need or prefer, we will provide you with a DVD of online worship or a paper copy of the sermon and prayers.

You're invited to our parking lot for Drive-Thru Holy Communion on February 7, from 11-11:30 AM (weather permitting). This is about an hour after the "live" worship video ends.

- Feb 7 **Story Church** (*online premiere at 9:30 AM*)
Mark 5:21-43 Jesus Heals Two People
Drive-Thru Holy Communion 11-11:30 AM
- Feb 14 **Story Church** (*online premiere at 9:30 AM*)
Mark 9:2-9 Transfiguration of the Lord
- Feb 17 **Ash Wednesday** (*online premiere at 9:30 AM*)
2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2 The Ministry of Reconciliation
- Feb 21 **Songs of the Heart** Lent 1 (*online premiere at 9:30 AM*)
Psalm 39 Contemplation
Holy Communion Live Online after 10 AM (*following the worship premiere*)
- Feb 28 **Songs of the Heart** Lent 2 (*online premiere at 9:30 AM*)
Psalm 51 Confession

Remember, the worship videos continue to be available online anytime after they premiere.

Come and Worship!

Sundays

9:30 AM—Online

Feb. 7 Drive-Thru
Holy Communion
11-11:30 AM
come to the parking lot
and we'll guide you
through



Fasting: We Really Don't Eat?

And whenever you fast... Matthew 6:16a

Each year our congregation has been encouraged to fast during Lent, beginning on Ash Wednesday (this year February 17). Jesus teaches us in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 6) about giving, praying, and fasting as virtues of the kingdom people. Jesus does not say, "If you fast." Rather he gives directions for "When you fast." Therefore, I invite you to fast with me during Lent.

Fasting is a spiritual discipline; it means abstaining from food *for spiritual purposes*. Fasting and prayer go together. Therefore we devote the time normally used for eating to reading scripture and prayer. Furthermore, the feeling of hunger is a reminder to draw near to God. We remove our dependence from food and instead depend upon God. Doing so often leads to greater intimacy with the Lord and to hearing more clearly what the Lord is saying to us. While there are interesting physical things that happen when we fast, far beyond anything physical is the spiritual. This is a discipline that helps us hear from the Lord and be in the Lord's presence.

When you eliminate food, your spirit becomes uncluttered by the things of this world and more sensitive to the things of God. Fasting stirs a hunger in your spirit that goes deeper than the temporary hunger you experience in your body. When you hunger for God, you will be filled. Fasting makes you more sensitive to the timing and voice of the Holy Spirit.

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement, advocated fasting on both Wednesday and Friday each week as a regular spiritual discipline. As time passed, however, Wesley fasted mostly on Fridays, which was the Anglican norm, and advocated Friday fasting for Methodists in August 1739 in his journal.

To Wesley, fasting was an important way to express sorrow for sin and penitence for overindulgence in eating and drinking. He believed it allowed more time for prayer and was more meaningful if combined with giving to the poor (see <http://www.umc.org/what-we-believe/what-does-the-united-methodist-church-say-about-fasting>).

How to fast? Wesley usually began a Friday fast at sundown on Thursday. This was in continuity with Jewish and early Christian tradition, which both marked the beginning of the day at sundown, not midnight. Wesley typically ended his fast at 3 PM on Friday, though some fast until supper on Friday. This would be an excellent way to fast during Lent (see <http://www.methodistprayer.org/wesleyfast/>).

Still, some people are not able to fast from food, such as those who are diabetic or pregnant. Wesley advised caution against extreme fasting and against fasting for those in fragile health. Please do not abstain from food if it is unhealthy for you. Alternatively, rather than fasting *from* food or something else, consider *adding* another spiritual discipline (habit, practice) to your life during this time. For instance, you could read scripture daily alone or with a small group. Or you could add serving somewhere each week.

If you choose to participate in this spiritual discipline or if you have any questions or need help with how to fast, please let Pastor John know. There is more detailed information online on Pastor John's blog at <http://johnlouk.blogspot.com/2011/03/fasting-for-lent.html>.



Lenten Small Groups

With whom will you share Lent?

The first Christians observed with great devotion the days of our Lord's passion and resurrection, and it became the custom of the Church to prepare for them by a season of penitence, fasting, and prayer. You are invited, therefore, in the name of the Lord, to observe a holy Lent, by self-examination, penitence, prayer, fasting, and almsgiving; and by reading and meditating on the Word of God. And, to make a right beginning of Lent, we will gather online for worship on Ash Wednesday, February 17, premiering at 7 PM.



Small Groups. Is there a small group of friends or neighbors with whom you could gather weekly during Lent, either online or safely in-person at the church or in your home? The small group focus will go along with the worship series. A guide will be available with scripture context and questions as well as questions for life sharing and growth. If you don't want to start or join your own group, Tim King is already leading a sermon discussion group. Just contact the church office directly or via salemchurch.life and we'll get you connected.



February Birthdays and Anniversaries

Birthdays:

- 2 Marcia Humphrey
- 2 Dave Davis
- 3 Deb Black
- 8 Roberta Sweet
- 9 Judy Thomas
- 9 John Louk
- 10 Wyatt Tjaden
- 10 Ethan Tjaden
- 10 Becky Bierwirth
- 12 Felix Ellis
- 13 Mike Beaton
- 14 Kyler Soukup
- 14 Cian McMullen
- 15 Dave Hunt
- 16 Tim Nolan
- 18 Betty Vondracek
- 20 Lori Hunt
- 21 Peyton Tunis
- 22 Lee Haring
- 23 Roseline Mudanya



- 25 Jane Knapp
- 25 Deb Fritz
- 25 Lowell Johnson
- 26 Ryan Rand
- 27 Evelyn Prasil
- 27 Melissa Hansen

Anniversaries:

- 14 Jim & JoEllen Jacobus
- 14 Shari & Dan Kendall
- 15 Bob & Josie Lanz
- 16 Gary & Gerry Wheeler

Job Opportunities



We're hiring! Do you, or someone you know, have the gift of hospitality with an eye for detail? Do you like to clean and make a room fresh? We are hiring a **Custodian** for our 6-year-old, beautiful facility. Contact the church office for the job description and application.

We're also hiring another position. Do you, or someone you know, have knowledge and experience of electrical, plumbing, mechanical, lawn care, and general carpentry work? We're hiring a new **Building Superintendent**. The primary purpose of this position is to care for Salem's buildings and grounds. Contact the church office for the job description and application or find them on our website at saalemchurch.life.

Please note, these two positions could be combined into one for the right person.

Finance Update

Salem Finance Update as of December 31, 2020	
Operating Income (Annual Giving):	
Offering Income	\$313,207
PPP Income	28,943
Total Operating Income	\$342,150
Budgeted Income to date	306,000
Amount Actual over/(under) Budget	36,150
Operating Expenses	
Expenses to date	\$308,615
Budgeted Expenses to date	301,151
Amount Actual over/(under) Budget	7,464
Net Amount of Actual Income over Actual Expenses	\$ 33,535
Building Fund	
Offering Income	\$79,325
PPP Income	6,057
Interest Income	28
2020 Mortgage payments	86,114
Net Amount Income over/(under) Expenses	(704)
Building Fund Balance held in Reserve (5.97 months)	\$42,441

4 Ways to Give at Salem



There are four ways to give your offering •mail an offering to the church office •give electronically at our website salemchurchcr.com/donate •use the mobile app Give+ •send a text to (855) 917-1810 with the dollar sign and the amount you are giving (e.g. \$25) and the text code, if applicable (e.g. \$25 M25). Need help? Go to salemchurch.life.

Mission Focus: Matthew 25

Joni Salazar

Following the August 10 derecho that swept across the Midwest, more than 500,000 people were left without power in Iowa alone. In the days after the storm, Matthew 25 mobilized volunteers to do door-to-door wellness checks to assess the needs of people in the community. It became quickly apparent that there were many with medical needs dependent upon power, such as home dialysis, nebulizers, CPAP machines, or refrigeration for insulin. Through donations, Matthew 25 was able to loan 68 generators and assist 100 families through this terrible time. Matthew 25 also received severe damage to their building during this time. Their roof collapsed and damaged much of the Groundswell Cafe. Even with their own devastation, the community pulled together to help Matthew 25 too.

One of the goals of Matthew 25 is to make fresh, healthy food accessible to all. Much of the area where we work on the west side of Cedar Rapids is considered a “food desert,” meaning that there are very few - if any - options for good-quality,



affordable food. As a way to provide fresh produce to these neighborhoods, Matthew 25 started the Cultivate Hope Produce Rescue with the help of Green Iowa AmeriCorps.

Caring for our fellow humans and all of creation binds us together and brings us a sense of relief. Sometimes when our plans get disrupted, we remember what is most important. We are a congregation of mission work and helping others in times of need. Let's help Matthew 25 continue to assist the community with our monetary donations. If giving by text, code is M25. Questions? Contact Joni Salazar at (319) 573-3943 or kenwvol@crschools.us.



Connecting with One Another

As we continue our physical distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have persons in the church intentionally making phone calls to connect with church members. Of course, even more people are doing that simply on their own because that's who we are as the church! If you need any help or support, you are welcome to contact the church at (319) 362-6178 or office@salemchurchcr.com or contact Pastor John directly at (319) 538-5145 or johnlouk@salemchurchcr.com. Additionally, our Staff would be delighted to connect with you. Go to www.salemchurch.life/staff and send an email to the person with whom you'd like to connect. Physical (social) distancing doesn't have to mean social loneliness.

Report of the Leadership Board

1-19-2021

Due to social distancing restrictions with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Salem Leadership Board met off site via Zoom. The monthly Board meeting opened with prayer at 5:35 PM. Those attending the virtual meeting were Amy Schilling, Donna Sanders, Jeremy Hague, Lowell Johnson, Linda Curson, Richard Pankey and Pastor John Louk.

Training – The Board welcomed two new members, Lowell Johnson and Richard Pankey. Others will be added soon. Pastor John shared some overview of the single board model and responsibilities. He will reach out to Jay Johnson from the Conference to set up some additional training for the Board. The church has the UMC Book of Discipline in digital format and will provide for board members. Pastor John shared that 2021 will likely have challenges as we look to transition back to in-person services and then deal with the outcome of General Conference’s decision on human sexuality.

Stewardship – Linda Curson presented a summary of Salem’s finances for 2020. As of December 31, 2020, the net amount of income over expenses was \$33,535. This was a result of expenses being down as well as additional funds from the PPP loan, and reaching our goal in offering income. We are back up to 6 month’s reserves on the Building Fund, a result of higher contributions in December. We paid apportionments in full in 2020 – the first time in recent years and are hopeful we can do so again in 2021. If we pay 100% of our apportionments for two consecutive years, we can receive forgiveness for the past year’s underpayments. The final 2020 records will be sent for audit.

Trustees – Demo on the west outback building should begin soon. The mower sustained damage, we will obtain an estimate from Midway before deciding next steps. Jeremy shared the maintenance contract listings;

this was reviewed, and appointments will be scheduled for those items due in January and February.

SPRC – We need to hire a Custodian and Building Superintendent – would consider combining the jobs. Kasey Foster stepped down as Outreach Director. We thank her for all her hard work. Other positions needing consideration include Student Ministry Director and Discipleship Director.

Additional Discussion – The Board spent time discussing re-entry. Amy shared the recommendations from the CDC and UMC based on positivity rate. Currently the positivity rate is still above 15%, which is the minimum needed prior to re-entry plans. Jeremy provided a spreadsheet that outlines steps for re-entry. Consideration of small group gatherings once the positivity level drops was discussed. The Board will continue to monitor the positivity rate and making plans for re-entry.

Meeting closed with prayer at 7:35 PM.



2021 Leadership Board

The Leadership Board in the new year is currently comprised of the following persons in their respective class years. More members are being added.

2021 - Jeremy Hague

2022 - Donna Sanders, Amy Schilling (chair)

2023 - Lowell Johnson, Richard Pankey

If you would like to contact the board, either contact the church office or Amy Schilling, chairperson, at a.schilling@salemchurchcr.com.



February 2021 Forecaster

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salemchurch.life

**RETURN SERVICE
REQUESTED**

Salem's mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.
"connecting people, building community, transforming lives through Jesus"

Salem's Sunday Morning Schedule (Online Worship Only)

9:30 AM Online Worship
www.facebook.com/salem.cr
www.salemchurch.life
www.salemchurchcr.com

Church Office closed in February

