



September 2020

the  
SPIRIT

# Salem Lutheran Church

shalom - salaam - salem - peace

*A Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Congregation*

## Are We There Yet?

When can we return to worship?" I am sure that this has been and continues to be the most frequently asked question among active Christians since the pandemic first began. And when can we return? The short answer is that we don't know. The long answer is very long indeed. It's a long answer because there are assumptions that are hidden in the question.

One assumption is that we haven't been worshipping – which, of course, we have. We've had a small group in church and streamed the service via Facebook Live. We've had pre-recorded worship on Facebook and YouTube. We've had online worship via Zoom. We've had drive-in worship with loudspeakers. We've had drive-in worship with an FM transmitter. We've had outdoor worship in the picnic grove. We have worshipped every single Sunday. And even if someone has not been able to access any of those worship services, that doesn't mean that they have been prohibited from worship. One can always worship at home.

I know. I can hear what you're saying: "But it's not the same! We want to get back in the sanctuary and return to what we know!"

And that brings me to the second assumption in the question, which is that returning to worship means that we'll return to something close to what we had pre-pandemic. And that is not the case. According to the guidelines, everyone will need to wear masks and practice physical distancing. Seats will be assigned so that no one passes others. There will be no singing, no unison readings, no assisting ministers, no communion, no passing of the peace, no offering plates being passed, and the service can only last ½ hour, and there will be no coffee hour. Believe me, it will not feel like you remember.

"But I know churches that do these things!" I can hear you say. And yes, some do these things, and in some of them there have been severe Covid outbreaks, and people have gotten ill, some severely so, and some have even died. And do you really want to risk that for yourself or your spouse or a fellow church member? I certainly hope not.

But if you're like me, you find yourself asking God, "Why? Why are you allowing this to happen? Why are you allowing this pandemic to continue on and on and on? Don't you want us to come worship you?" Those questions were floating around in my mind when I was on the phone with one of our older members. And all of the sudden she voiced the same questions! And then she offered an answer: "I think that God has been trying to tell us something and we're just not getting the message. And until we get the message, God isn't going to make this thing go away." I was astounded because that was the exact thought that was in my mind!

So what might God be trying to tell us? Three things come to mind.

First, worship attendance has been declining for decades but what have we done about it? Not enough – that's for sure. Maybe it's that we didn't do enough inviting. Or maybe we didn't do enough welcoming. Or maybe we didn't change our worship enough to make it meaningful for younger people or people from different traditions or people who hadn't grown up in the church. The fact is, we weren't accomplishing the main task that Jesus gave us – to go out into the world and make disciples of all people. We wouldn't leave our church walls and we wouldn't change how

we did things and perhaps God simply ran out of patience and kicked us out of our buildings! And that, my friends, HAS increased the spread of the gospel. We used to get 40 people on a Sunday morning. Last Sunday we had around 30 in worship and by the end of the day we had had about 50 views on FB for a total of 80, or double what we used to get! Our worship service on Pentecost has had over 1600 views the last time I checked!

Second, we had been loath to change how we worshiped. Lutherans and Episcopalians and Roman Catholics have tended to make the form of worship more important than the worship itself. We have idolized our liturgy and hymnody, our rites and rituals, our customs and traditions. We have focused on what WE want, not what speaks to the guests or the newcomers in our midst. We have done what pleases US, regardless of whether or not it pleases God. Perhaps the only way God could force us out of these practices was to completely disrupt them, making it impossible for us to do things the way we were used to doing them.

And finally, I think we had designed worship around what WE wanted, not what God wanted. Worship is supposed to be centered on God, and not on us. Worship is supposed to be all about recognizing that God is God and we are not. It's supposed to be about realizing that everything that we are and have is a gift from God. It's supposed to be about us loving God with all our hearts and souls and minds and bodies, about giving God thanks and praise, about testifying to God's power and love, about offering ourselves to God, about allowing God to transform our minds and our hearts so that we leave enlightened, and enabled, and empowered to live our lives differently from others so that they want what we have found.

In the end, the question isn't "When will we return to worship?"; the question is, "How can we worship God the way God wants to be worshiped right here and right now in the midst of this pandemic?"

I urge you to talk with God. Pray every day. Ask God what it is that God wants to do in your life. Ask God how you might better worship in your daily life. Ask God how you can get more out of the worship opportunities available to you.

"When can we return to worship?" The question reminds me of when I was little and our family would be on a car trip and my sister and I would keep asking our parents, "Are we there yet?" Asking the question didn't make us get there any faster. Asking the question didn't change the destination. Asking the question didn't make the trip any more enjoyable. But what did help was when my parents would refocus us on what we could see out the windows as we traveled along.

My guess is that instead of asking God if we're there yet, perhaps it would be more productive to look around and give thanks for what we have in the present moment. If the pandemic has taught us anything it is that the things we take for granted – unmasked faces, shaking hands, hugging, being in crowds – can simply disappear. Instead of looking at what we don't have, what we can't do, what we don't like, let's assume that God has a reason for all of this, and let's give thanks for each and every blessing we still have. Abundant blessings be yours! – *Pastor Marjo*

## SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

3160 Park Avenue  
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604  
Phone (203) 336-3300 ▪ Fax (203) 336-8813

Website - [www.salembridgeport.org](http://www.salembridgeport.org)

Facebook - [www.facebook.com/SalemBridgeport/](http://www.facebook.com/SalemBridgeport/)

### Church Office Hours

Thursday 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

### Worship Services

9:30am Outdoor Worship

### Salem's Staff

The Rev. Marjo Anderson, Pastor  
Cell Phone (203) 982-3441  
[marjoanderson@aol.com](mailto:marjoanderson@aol.com)

Karl Kraft, Office Manager  
Office Phone (203) 336-3300  
[salemsec123@sbcglobal.net](mailto:salemsec123@sbcglobal.net)

Jennifer Reyes, Sexton  
Pablo, Cruz, Sexton  
Office Phone (203) 336-3300, ext. 10

## New Address

Carol and Richard Lansing  
98 Cottage Street  
Trumbull, CT 06611

## LEADERSHIP AT SALEM

### COUNCIL

Marjo Anderson, Pastor  
Ray Anderson, President  
Tom Larson, Vice-President  
Nancy Headford, Secretary  
Rich Kenyon, Treasurer  
Liz Bales  
Sandra Brown  
Judi Nielsen  
Emily Sokoloski  
Diane Tomasko  
Bill Winter

## We Are Grateful



### Capital Improvements

Barbara Howard

### Memorial Donations

Ann Martin (in memory of Reinie Lange, Derm & Virginia Luckner, and Charles Weber)

### Outreach

Marjo Anderson, Rich & Mary Ann Kenyon

**Newsletter deadline is the 15th of each month  
unless otherwise noted in the monthly  
calendar.**

**Next deadline date is **September 15th** for the  
**October issue!****

**Email submissions to  
[salemsec123@sbcglobal.net](mailto:salemsec123@sbcglobal.net)**



# September 2020

## Salem Lutheran Church

SUN	MON	TUE Sep 1	WED 2	THU 3	FRI 4	SAT 5
		● 9:30am Tuesday Talk and Text Study		● 6pm Genesis Game Night for All		
6 <b>Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost</b> ● 9:30am Worship ● 10:30am Salem Coffee Hour ● 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church ● 12:30pm New Directions Ministries ● 4:15pm CPC Gazebo	7 <b>Labor Day - Office Closed</b> ● 4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on A	8 ● 9:30am Tuesday Talk and Text Study ● 6pm Stewardship Committee	9	10 ● 6pm Genesis Game Night for All	11	12 ● 8am Men's Breakfast
13 <b>Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost</b> ● 9:30am Worship ● 10:30am Salem Coffee Hour ● 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church ● 12:30pm New Directions Ministries ● 4:15pm CPC Gazebo	14 ● 4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on A ● 6:30pm Social Ministry Committee	15 ● 9:30am Tuesday Talk and Text Study	16	17 ● 6pm Genesis Game Night for All	18	19 ● 11am Genesis' InnerView Chat'n'Chew
20 <b>Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost</b> ● 9:30am Worship ● 10:30am Salem Coffee Hour ● 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church ● 12:30pm New Directions Ministries ● 4:15pm CPC Gazebo	21 ● 4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on A ● 6:30pm Salem Finance Committee Meeting ● 7:30pm Salem Executive Committee Meeting	22 ● 9:30am Tuesday Talk and Text Study	23	24 ● 6pm Genesis Game Night for All	25	26
27 <b>Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost</b> ● 9:30am Worship ● 10:30am Salem Coffee Hour ● 10:30am Christ Presbyterian Church ● 12:30pm New Directions Ministries	28 ● 4pm Southern CT Rostered Leaders Mtg on A ● 7pm Council Meeting	29 ● 9:30am Tuesday Talk and Text Study	30			

Nancy Sidoti.....	2
Bennett Guadagno.....	2
Dennis Norberg.....	3
Emily Sokoloski.....	8
Richard Kenyon .....	9
Eileen Anderson.....	11
Al DeWalt.....	12
Thomas Larson .....	15
Peter Mavilla .....	17
Ashley Rosa.....	21
Susan Molnar.....	22
Jenna Llanos.....	22
Dorothy Schrum.....	23
Kyle DeWalt .....	24
Olivia Mavilla.....	24
Kim Lange.....	25
Carol Mavilla .....	26

Stephanie Schott .....	26
Jennifer Reyes.....	29
Samantha Baronavski.....	30



## Food Pantry Closing

It is with regret that I inform you of the closure of Salem's Food Pantry. Our program survived for five years and the crushing blow came with the arrival of the coronavirus pandemic. Coupled with this catastrophic dilemma was my growing physical limitations from Parkinson's and the inability to find person(s) willing to assume this programs responsibilities.

Once the decision to close was made, our attention turned to liquidating our program. All perishable and non perishable foods were donated to other pantries and soup kitchens. The physical assets (refrigerators, freezers, shopping carts, shelving, etc) likewise were donated to other food programs. Lastly, our bank account was dissolved — with an objective to fulfill its intent — to further programs that are associated with social ministry and feeding the hunger challenged individuals in Bridgeport and its surrounding communities. Thus, approximately 60% was donated to the Greater Bridgeport Council of Churches Culinary Program and 40% to Salem's social ministry programs.

Joe Bales

The following people have asked for healing, help, guidance or comfort.

Joan B  
Barbara B  
Sam B  
Erick D  
Grace D  
Hannah & Joseph  
Bob H  
Dennis H  
Sylvitha  
Jay  
Mike R  
Jane M  
Jana B  
William S  
Daphne B  
Peter K  
Bobby W

Anna  
Barbara  
James S  
Sarah R  
Brooks A  
Angie  
Liz F.  
Hazel P  
Katherine P



# GUIDE TO VIRTUAL / ONLINE CHURCH

## **TO ACCESS WORSHIP VIA FACEBOOK:**

You do NOT have to be a Facebook member to watch it.

Just go to [www.facebook.com/salembridgeport](https://www.facebook.com/salembridgeport).

On the left, click on videos, which will bring up "Latest Videos".

Then just click on the one you want to watch.

(Sometimes a notice might pop up to say you can't access it, but if that happens, just click on the message and it should disappear and the video should play.)

If you can't hear, please know that the videos are closed captioned, so you can see the text (at least of the speaking parts

if not the singing) as you watch. In order to see the text, however, you need to turn that feature on for your device.

(On my iPhone 6s, I went to Settings, then Accessibility, then scrolled down to Subtitles & Captioning, then turned on Closed Captions & SDH, and voila! The captions appeared like magic!)

## **TO ACCESS WORSHIP VIA YOUTUBE:**

We are also posting our worship on YouTube.

To access worship that way,

go to YouTube.com,

click on the magnifying glass to search for Salem Lutheran Church Bridgeport CT

and we should come up.

There'll be a red circle with a white S in it and under that are the videos.

Once you find Salem on YouTube, subscribe to our channel and it will be easier to find next time.

Again, if you can't hear, videos are closed captioned. Just click on the 3 dots on the upper right corner of the screen to turn on closed captioning.

## **TO ACCESS COFFEE HOUR, MEETINGS, & OTHER GATHERINGS:**

Meetings and Gatherings (like Coffee Hour, Bible Study, Council and Committees) are being held online via Zoom.

If your Salem committee or group would like to meet via Zoom, please contact Karl

by emailing him at [salemsec123@sbcglobal.net](mailto:salemsec123@sbcglobal.net) or by leaving a message on the church phone, 203-336-3300.

To access the invitation go to our website, click on the Resources tab, and click on Calendar.

So if you'd like to join coffee hour, for example, click on "coffee hour" for the date you want, and it will open up the invitation. At the bottom of the invitation is even an option to "copy to my calendars".

Again, if you have any difficulty accessing any meeting or event, call or text me at 203-982-3441

Links to zoom meetings will be emailed out via our weekly email blast (which also posts to Facebook and our website).

## **TO ACCESS STAFF:**

Due to the pandemic, our Office Manager, Karl, and I will be working primarily from our homes.

I have been coming in once a week to record worship

and Karl usually comes in on Thursdays to take care of tasks that cannot be accomplished from elsewhere.

To reach Karl, just call the church number and leave a message.

He will pick up your message remotely and return your call.

And if you need pastoral care – even just to talk – please don't hesitate to call or text me at 203-982-3441.

# Social Ministry During the Summer at Salem

June-August 2020

Although the building is closed, Social Ministry at Salem continued this summer as our congregation meets the ongoing needs of the community.

## **Community Suppers.**

Salem volunteers served in May and July and are scheduled to serve again on September 16. The process now is that hot meals are prepared and packaged by the volunteers at Golden Hill United Methodist and then distributed to those who come to supper.

## **Salem Food Pantry.**

The Food pantry is officially closed and regular participants have been given a list of open food pantries. All food has been distributed or given to other pantries. Refrigerators have been donated to the Council of Churches for its new FEED Center. There was approximately \$6000 remaining; \$4000 was donated to the Council of Churches for hunger programs and \$2000 will be used by Salem to provide gift cards to people in need.

A group of men from Salem and other congregations who picked up pantry supplies weekly at the Connecticut Food Bank for the Salem pantry are now helping with weekly pick-ups for Nourish Bridgeport which distributes food at UCC's location on North Avenue. In addition, vegetables from the Salem summer garden have been harvested and given to Nourish Bridgeport.

## **Council of Churches.**

The Council has continued to use the Salem kitchen to prepare and then distribute emergency food in connection with the COVID pandemic. As the Council will not be able to move into its new FEED Center until the fall and because it has received additional emergency funding, it will continue to use Salem for the next several months and possibly until year-end.

The Council is investigating the possibility of re-starting its CREATE culinary training program, again at Salem, if agreeable with Salem and if arrangements can be made for proper cleaning and expense sharing. The Mobile Market continues to bring fresh produce to underserved neighborhoods and to distribute the emergency food prepared at Salem. The street outreach worker continues to work with young people advising them on COVID precautions and on help available.

The Council has sponsored an on-line series called "Becoming Anti-Racist – Raising the BAR" which involves video segments and small group discussions about "The Color of Compromise" discussing the history and impact of racism in the United States. The final session is at 7:30 pm, Thursday, August 27.

## **Boy Scouts.**

Troop 103, sponsored by Salem, held its delayed Annual Pasta Dinner on Saturday, August 15. It was organized as a Drive-Through and Pick-up with Scouts preparing food in the kitchen and then, while masked and socially distanced, delivering to vehicles. Importantly, two Scouts have met all the requirements to become Eagle Scouts. In addition, Mark Hopco, himself an Eagle Scout, is celebrating 50 years of Scouting, all with Troop 103.

## **Healthcare items.**

A healthcare team is reviewing pandemic protocols, checking temperatures at outdoor services, and will make recommendations on in-person worship. Masks were made for some people until masks became more available. Health Notes continue in the Spirit.

## **Synod/Council of Churches.**

Budgeted payments were made to the Synod and the Council of Churches so they could continue their various programs and ministries.



# Protect Yourself and Others

Protect ourselves and others by: regular hand-washing, covering our mouth and nose when coughing, etc, staying home if sick, and getting vaccinated such as with the flu vaccine. The CDC recommends flu vaccination for everyone six months of age and older. You should receive a flu vaccination even if you are healthy, because the virus can be transferred to others. Pregnant women should get the flu shot to protect themselves and their unborn child.

Two new vaccines have been approved for egg allergic people. Talk to your doctor about what type of flu vaccine is right for you. There is a stronger vaccine for people over 65 years old.



Don't forget to ask your doctor about the diphtheria, pertussis, and tetanus vaccine. If you are over sixty, also check with your doctor about the shingles and the pneumococcal vaccines.

Any illness you have can make you more vulnerable for getting COVID-19. So get vaccinated.



This fall, as we enter Stage 3 of Reopening, remember the 3W's: Wear a mask, Watch your distance of 6 feet, and Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds.

Your parish nurses, Salem's Health and Safety Team, and the Church Council will make sure we all follow CDC Guidelines as we open up Salem again. The safety of our members is of upmost importance to us.

## Your temperature is ... 102.8!

It used to be that a slight fever was no cause for concern. But in an ongoing pandemic, an elevated temperature needs to be taken seriously, right away.

### ***Save yourself (and others)***

Even if you think it's just the flu and not [COVID-19](#), here's what to do.

### **Call your doctor or the emergency department at your local hospital.**

"Anyone over 50 who has a fever of 102 or higher should get it checked out," advises emergency department doctor Leigh Vinocur, national spokesperson for the American College of Emergency Physicians. If you're over 65, take it even more seriously: Average temperature in younger people is 98.2, but over age 65 it's a full degree lower — 97.2. There are many reasons, including reduced lung function and less fat under the skin.

### **Know the emergency symptoms.**

Flu-like symptoms vary, but some call for emergency action even if they're not caused by COVID-19: trouble breathing, pain or pressure in the chest, lethargy and confusion, and bluish lips or face. If any of these are present, call 911 right away. Describe your symptoms. Don a mask before the EMTs arrive.

### **Separate yourself from others.**

If the situation isn't dire and a doctor sends you home, plant yourself in a sickroom and use a separate bathroom. Even then, wear a face mask if you have one — and if it doesn't hamper your breathing — to lower the chance of germs spreading. Cover your mouth and nose when you sneeze, and wash your hands frequently with soap and water.

## The Pandemic and Church Activities

Salem's insurance company requires that everyone who uses the building follow all CDC and federal, state, and local government guidelines regarding health and safety during the pandemic. We are still in Phase 2 in CT, and Governor Lamont recently postponed Phase 3 indefinitely due to a rise in Covid-19 cases nationwide. Phase 2 means that everyone 65 and older and everyone with underlying health concerns – such as cancer, kidney disease, lung conditions, immunocompromised condition, obesity, heart conditions, type 2 diabetes – or those who live with people who fall into these categories, should still be sheltering in place – which means only going out for food or medical reasons. Since nearly all our active members are 65 or older, this means:

Salem will not be gathering indoors for worship as long as we are in Phase 2. Once we are in Phase 3 we will re-evaluate.

Salem meetings will continue on Zoom. Unless there is a need to meet in person (such as the property committee addressing building issues) we will not meet in person.

Other users of the building will be granted access on the condition that they conform to all CDC and federal, state, and local government guidelines regarding Covid-19. The other congregations have a much younger demographic so are not restricted by the sheltering-in-place requirements of Phase 2.

## Masks

Masks are required and must be worn correctly so that they cover both the mouth and the nose. If you cannot wear a mask, we ask that you refrain from attending – for your own safety and for the safety of everyone else.

The most effective mask in terms of material is the disposable surgical mask. The virus does not get through that mask although it can escape through the gaps around the edges. To seal up the edges, the most effective means is by tying pantyhose around the mask. Bandanas are not very effective. And masks with ventilators protect only the wearer; they offer no protection to others.

## Law and Grace

While we all need to do our best to wear our masks properly and to keep at least 6' away from each other, the fact is that many or most of us forget. When people forget, we all need to gently remind them. If we're gently reminded, we should be grateful because the person reminding us is making sure we are all as safe as we can be.

## How the virus is transmitted

There are 3 methods of transmission.

While much is still unknown about the coronavirus, it is believed that the primary method of transmission is through **aerosols**. Visualize what happens when you are out in the cold weather and you can see your breath. What you are seeing are the aerosols. Aerosols don't simply drop to the ground but can remain in the air for over a day. Aerosols also don't stay right in front of you. If you're outdoors they move with the wind. Imagine chasing a piece of paper that you've dropped. If you're indoors, they move freely about the room according to the air currents. Imagine the smell of fresh baked bread. The smell doesn't stay by the person holding it. It eventually moves around until everyone in the room can smell it. The aerosols we exhale can contain the tiny virus. That's why it's important to have a mask that is dense enough to prevent its escape through the fabric, and to have a mask that fits tight enough to prevent its escape around the mask. While bandanas do protect from droplets, they do not protect from aerosols.

A second possible method of transmission is through droplets that are emitted when people cough or sneeze. These droplets, however, fall to the ground fairly quickly, so unless you are actually coughed or sneezed on, there is little risk of getting Covid in this way.

A third possible method of transmission is through fomites, objects that are contaminated with the virus. But since the virus does not survive long on human hands, you would have to touch your eyes, nostrils or mouth right after touching a fomite to become infected.



**Summer Worship** through Labor Day for Salem and for Genesis will be at 9:30 in the Picnic Grove, weather permitting. If light or moderate rain, we'll have a drive-in service. If a serious storm, we'll meet online via Zoom. No matter what the format we use for the rest of the summer or the fall, we plan to stream via Facebook Live. On Sundays where the service is pre-recorded in the sanctuary it will also be streamed on YouTube. If you can't watch at 9:30 Sundays, video worship services will be saved to Facebook and posted on YouTube so you can watch them later. Closed Captioning will be provided when available. For help turning on Captioning contact Karl or Pastor Marjo.

**Salem and Genesis members and friends, don't forget to join us for our virtual coffee hour on zoom!** Even though we are having outdoor worship this summer please be aware that there is still online zoom coffee hour at 10:30ish. Pastor Marjo will join as soon as she can after worship but you needn't wait for her. Link is [HERE](#) and also on the calendar on our website, salembridgeport.org, under "Resources". Folks at home can join in of course, and those at worship can join in via the zoom app on their smart phone right from the picnic grove or even on their drive home (safe driving mode hides video but you can still talk and hear).

**Summer Stewardship** – Even though our building is closed, our ministries (and the expenses to fund those ministries) continue. We are grateful for everyone who continues to give their tithes and offerings to our work here at Salem. We are also grateful to those who have taken advantage of the opportunity to give online, especially to sign up for regular weekly or monthly donations. Every gift no matter how small is appreciated and will enable us to continue to do God's work in this place. If you'd like help signing up for online giving please do not hesitate to contact Pastor Marjo, Karl, Ray Anderson, Jean Larson, or Nancy Headford.

**Game Night!** Every Thursday from 6:00-7:00 we gather online to see what the "Gaming Commission" has planned for us. Sometimes we play Bingo or Scattergories. Sometimes we play Headbands or Trivial Pursuit. Sometimes we act out Charades. But ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS, we LAUGH! For more information, speak with Jeanette or her daughter, Lynnette Lawson. Zoom link is available on Salem's calendar.

**Inner-View Chat'n'Chew** meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of the month, 11:00-1:00. It's a time of fun and fellowship that gives us a chance to celebrate the gift that God has given us in one another. Evites are sent out to those on the Genesis mailing list but you can also find the Zoom link on Salem's calendar.

**Health and Safety for those we love – and that means YOU!** As we are working very hard to cooperate with city officials and health departments to keep Covid levels low in our state, please remember that unless there is a special need to meet in person, **coffee hour, Bible study, meetings and events will continue to be online only.** Safety protocols (in line with CDC, ELCA, government, health department, and insurance guidelines for all Salem groups and functions) will continue to be recommended by Salem's Health and Safety Team (Carol Lansing, Eileen Anderson, Dale Danowski, Liz Bales, Nancy Kidwell, and Pastor Marjo) and approved by Salem's Executive Committee or Council. Even though economic necessity has forced some reopening of businesses, we are in actual fact no safer from the virus now than we were back in March when everything shut down. PLEASE – no matter how safe YOU feel, out of love for one another, wear a mask and physically distance from one another. Thank you!

**Need help finding a Salem zoom meeting or need to set one up?** Just go to our website at Salem-Bridgeport.org, click on the Resources tab, then on Calendar. On the calendar just find the day and click on the event and a zoom invitation will appear. Sometimes you may have to click on "(+2 more)" in order to see additional vents that don't fit in the calendar square. If your Salem committee or group would like to meet via Zoom, please contact Karl by emailing him at [salemsec123@sbcglobal.net](mailto:salemsec123@sbcglobal.net) or by leaving a message on the church phone, 203-336-3300

# Ebony and Ivory?

Wonder why some of your friends are saying “Black Lives Matter” when obviously all lives matter? Wonder why when we have anti-racism laws, people keep talking about “systemic” or “structural racism”? Wonder why the church is so focused on this issue? If you’re looking for answers to these and other questions, here are some great ways to learn:

## 1. The Council of Churches of Greater Bridgeport invites its members to take the following steps to work for a more just and equitable society:

\*Starting on **September 27**, and going at least **through May 20, 2021** we will hold monthly zoom meetings, **the third Thursday of every month from 7:30 to 8:15 PM**. You can register on our website – <https://ccgb.salsalabs.org/barmonthlyseries/index.html> - & join these conversations to learn more, talk in small groups, & continue to engage in anti-racist work.

\*You can take the 21 day Racial Equity Challenge - <https://myersparkpres.org/project/better-when-were-back-together/> - all by yourself, to continue to learn, reflect, and act. This is a great resource created by the Myers Park Presbyterian Church, in Charlotte, VA.

\*Also, here is a link - <https://default.salsalabs.org/Tc340bebd-4d68-4800-b754-7c48a473cd23/464704ca-cfbd-4af1-9836-dc2cefbf86ab> - to a document which lists these resources and our recommendations for a number of local and national organizations doing excellent anti-racism and justice work.

## 2. Read the 2019 Declaration of the ELCA to People of African Descent & its accompanying Explanation at [http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Slavery Apology Explanation.pdf](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Slavery%20Apology%20Explanation.pdf) or go to ELCA.org, scroll down to “Resources”, scroll down to “Racial Justice”, and click on the Declaration to read and/or download.

## 3. Listen to this video lecture by Tom Skinner: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bvKQx4ycTmA> . It gives a much more detailed history of slavery in this country than we received in our history classes at school, & explains how it was the issue of slavery that created the divide between mainline & evangelical Christians.

## 4. Read the book, **Dear Church: a Love Letter from a Black Preacher to the Whitest Denomination in the US** by Lenny Duncan. There have been many explanations for the church’s decline, but Duncan sees a direct correlation between the church’s lack of diversity and its lack of vitality. Part manifesto, part confession, and all love letter, Dear Church offers a bold new vision for the future of the ELCA and the rest of mainline Protestant Christianity and calls everyone – leaders and laity alike – to the front lines of the church’s renewal through racial equality and justice. ***Salem has a few copies of the book, so if you would like to borrow one, please speak with Pastor Marjo.***

Rev. Marjo Anderson  
Salem Lutheran Church  
3160 Park Avenue  
Bridgeport, CT 06606

July 28, 2020

Dear Marjo and Members of the Congregation,

On behalf of the Board, our staff, and especially our clients, I'm grateful to the entire congregation for your donation of \$4,000 on July 2, 2020 for Food Purchases. In the midst of this pronounced darkness and fear, it's really encouraging to see what all of us can do when we collaborate, support each other, and reach out to people who are struggling and isolated.



Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation has given us a grant to prepare 500+ meals a week for adults who are food insecure. Here are a couple of photos Chef Aditi took as we ramped up the meal preparation, and then as our Mobile Marketplace delivered the meals to hungry families. We now believe that we can produce more than 400 meals each week, which is great.

Your partnership, as always, helps us reach those who need us most. We are employing recent graduates of our CREATE culinary program, feeding people who are hungry, and raising the visibility of our FEED Center all at once. We continue to be in touch with the youth we've supported all year long, and are starting a computer loan program to ensure that they can navigate the challenge of distance learning.

I'm grateful for one more demonstration that we are all in this together!

Warmly,

Rev. Cass L. Shaw  
President and Chief Executive Officer







# Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

**STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION**

## *COVID-19 Response Fund supports ELCA ministries across the country*

By John Potter

As COVID-19 spread throughout the United States this spring, unemployment soared and demands on food pantries, shelters and social services rose. In response, the ELCA launched a special fundraising appeal, donations to which have supported the ministries most in need and best positioned to help.

Among the recipients of the COVID-19 Response Fund was the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod, which was awarded \$7,500. With additional support from its own disaster fund, the synod had \$12,500 to allocate. Bethlehem Lutheran, a redevelopment congregation in New Orleans, received \$2,000 to support its Community Table ToGo free meal program.

One of the city's oldest historically African American congregations, Bethlehem in early March began offering the neighborhood a free hot lunch on Sundays. After the pandemic struck, the program expanded to provide hot meals to go three times a week. At press time, it was feeding 400 to 450 people each week.

"One thing Jesus is really consistent about is that he's always on the side of feeding people, throughout his ministry," said Ben Groth, pastor of Bethlehem. The congregation has used this idea to guide its expanded meal program.

The COVID-19 Response Fund has "made a huge difference," Groth said. "We were moving from a once-a-week meal, which is nice but is not changing anyone's life. Doing it three times a week has allowed us to become something that people really count on as a regular part of their food-security plan."

Bethlehem launched its Community Table program as many other local efforts were suspending services or shutting down. More people began showing up for the program—and more neighbors turned out to help. One of those volunteers was De Borah Wells, a cooking instructor who, because of the pandemic, had been laid off as a chef at Commander's Palace, a historic restaurant nearby.

Wells had learned about Bethlehem's program from Facebook. "I asked if she'd like to come and volunteer," Groth said. "It wasn't until after that initial interaction that I realized she was a chef and that this was the best thing that could've happened to us. She's the real key."

With Wells' expertise, those serving the program better understood how to plan meals for hundreds of people. "I live in the Central City community, and when I saw [Groth's] announcement about meals to go, I wanted to help feed my neighbors," she said. "It has been an incredible experience. A truly meaningful aspect is the spirit of willingness on the part of the [Bethlehem] volunteers."

Even during quarantine, when Groth has hosted Tuesday-evening prayers via Zoom and posted Sunday-morning sermons on Facebook, Bethlehem has seen increased interest in the life of the congregation. "People just keep showing up," he said.

"I've been sending out invitations to a new-member class during quarantine, when we're not leaving the house—seven or eight have already signed up," he added. "I can't imagine there are many churches right now that are holding a new-member class. People have been really attracted to what's happening."

"Miracles abound"

In April, the Grand Canyon Synod was awarded \$10,000 from the COVID-19 Response Fund to assist Native American and Latino ministries with food, water and hygiene items. Deborah Hutterer, synod bishop, issued a challenge to match the amount. Within a week, the synod had raised \$13,700.

"Miracles abound. In a crisis this church responded generously and quickly," she said. "Just as God pours out love with great abandon for us, we get to use the resources given to let that love flow in tangible ways, like providing basic needs to our neighbors in need."

Eight synod ministries received grants from the total fund amount, including Navajo Evangelical Lutheran Mission and House of Prayer, Rock Point, Ariz. Founded in 1954, the mission campus includes a clinic, an elementary school and housing.

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The on-site Hózhó Café serves nutritional meals every weekday throughout the year. "COVID response funds have allowed House of Prayer's longtime commitment to Hózhó Café to double daily capacity," said Katie Adelman, executive director of the mission and pastor of House of Prayer. "COVID relief donor responses have included needed funding, but also nonperishable food, water, packaging and delivery products, PPE, masks, a large-capacity refrigerator, sanitizing products and prayer."

Five days a week for three months, mission staff provided 60 to 70 to-go meals and delivered 110 student meals and learning packets, she said. In that time, they prepared and delivered more than 50 boxes of food to older adults and sick neighbors weekly and helped facilitate food drops by relief agencies.

Although the mission's network has grown, the pandemic has also highlighted the ways its community has been disproportionately affected. "For the Navajo people, accessing food is difficult, far away, expensive and limited," Adelman said. "Empty shelves have not been refilled for nearly three months. The COVID crisis has brought to the public eye the food and water insecurity that preexisted the pandemic."

The challenges facing Native communities will not be solved by COVID response funding—but it has made a significant impact. "We have been overwhelmed and grateful for the generosity of so many," Adelman said.

John G. Potter is a content editor of *Living Lutheran*.





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# ELCA GLOBAL LINKS

Stay informed. Be inspired. Get involved.

## Communities face drought with resilience and ingenuity



**M**any communities in Cambodia have waited a long time for a good rain. Several years of drought have made life difficult, especially for farmers. Some rice paddies are bone-dry, and other crops such as corn, green beans and sesame seeds don't have enough water to survive.

Some farmers migrate toward cities or out of the country to find work to support their families; this is one example of how climate change is inducing or amplifying migration. But for La Phat, a leader in the Buo community, that solution wasn't the best one. Along with her community, she saw an opportunity to mitigate the effects of the drought so people could stay in their homes rather than migrate. And thanks to your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response, this dream is on its way to becoming reality.

Working with longtime ELCA partner Life With Dignity, La Phat and members of the community designed a response plan to conduct training programs in disaster risk mitigation, advocacy, alternative livelihood techniques and more. Your gifts to Lutheran Disaster Response supported the plan. The community also received support in digging three ponds, which individual members helped pay for, and obtained 20 plastic tanks to store water. The ponds will capture the little rain they get during monsoon season, which can be retained and used for farming. Construction of five new wells and repair of two old wells are also underway.

The project "will check this migration and bring people to look for alternatives and actions to mitigate through new and adapted agricultural practices, fresh livelihood options and water-related activities," La Phat said. "We see hope [in] this new venture."

For Lutheran Disaster Response, bringing hope, healing and renewal means responding to both fast-moving disasters, such as hurricanes and earthquakes, and slow-moving ones, such as drought and health crises. Thanks to you, Lutheran Disaster Response can continue to support communities as they recover from disaster.

Community leader La Phat poses with one of the newly dug ponds that will store water during times of drought.