



Salem Lutheran Church

shalom - salaam - salem - peace

A Reconciling in Christ Congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

THE NATIVITY
OF
OUR LORD

CHRISTMAS EVE

December 24, 2020
7:00 PM



... to you is born
this day in the city of
David a Savior,
who is the
Messiah, the Lord.

Luke 2:11, NRSV

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Gathering in Our Cars

Thank you for joining us this evening.

*While we all wish we could celebrate as in years past,
tonight is not about a sentimental human tradition.*

*Tonight we come to worship the awesome, amazing, astounding God
who created all that is and yet who came to earth to live among us!*

*Tonight we come to be together in a way that shows that we are looking out,
not for our own needs, but for the needs of each other.*

For some it's not Christmas unless we can sing carols, so we are in cars to sing carols.

*For some it's not Christmas unless we can be in the Nave,
so we will come in when the singing is done.*

*For some it's not Christmas unless we can light candles and sing Silent Night,
so we will have candles and sing outside or in our cars.*

No, it's not all that we want or desire.

But if we're here to love God and to love one another, then we will find all that we need.

INTRODUCTION

On a long winter evening we gather to proclaim the coming of the light.

Isaiah announces that the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

Paul reminds us that the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.

In the familiar account of Christ's birth,

the evening sky is bright with the heavenly host singing, "Glory to God in the highest".

Amid our broken world we proclaim that the prince of peace is born among us.

*God comes to us in human flesh – in Christ's body and blood –
so that we may be bearers of divine light to all the world.*

EXPLANATION OF THE ADVENT WREATH

The wreath is of course a circle – reminding us of the perfection and eternity of God.

Many wreaths are decorated with evergreen branches.

The evergreen, like the circle, is a symbol of eternity and also of life.

Holly is sometimes used instead of – or with – the evergreen.

The sharp points of the leaves of the holly remind us of Christ's crown of thorns.

The red berries remind us of his blood.

*There is a story that holly berries were white until Christ's blood
fell on them – causing them to be red ever since.*

Christ is, of course, the light of the world – hence the candles.

CAROL PRELUDE

WELCOME

Pastor Marjo:

Welcome in the name of the living God
whose greatness is beyond human imagination, yet dwells in human souls.

For those of you who don't know me,
I'm Pastor Marjo Anderson of Salem Lutheran Church in Bridgeport, CT in the United States.
While our offices are closed at present, you can always reach us at our website:
SalemBridgeport.org,
on our Facebook page, SalemBridgeport,
and on our YouTube channel, Salem Lutheran Church, Bridgeport Ct.

Jeanette:

And I'm Jeanette Harris, Lay Licensed Minister of Genesis Gospel Café here in Bridgeport
and we are thrilled to be joining you this evening!

Tonight's first part of worship will be in your cars
where you will be able to sing Christmas carols in the safety of our own personal space.
This part of the service is also being streamed to Facebook Live.
After we've sung our hearts out,
we will end our Livestream and invite those of you who would like to come inside to do so,
masked and appropriately distanced, for a brief service of Holy Communion and Candle-
lighting.
If you'd prefer to stay in your cars for that part of the service, you may do so.
You can simply come to the door and get your communion elements and candles
and then return immediately to your cars.
For those who will be coming inside,
you will get your communion elements and candles as you leave.
After everyone has left the sanctuary,
we will close our worship by singing together "Silent Night" –
either outside or in our cars, depending on the weather.

Pastor Marjo:

On Sunday we will be joining other congregations in the New England Synod
in an online service of Lessons and Carols which will premiere on our FB page at 9:30.
On Sunday evening at 6 pm we will meet on zoom
for our Sunday Night Alive event "The Gifts of Christmas".
We hope you will join us for both these events on Sunday.

Links to our donate page & worship bulletin
which has both the order of worship & announcements, as well as other resources
are included on our website at SalemBridgeport.org/Live and on our Facebook page.

As we begin our worship, let us pray....

**O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant! O come ye, O come ye to Bethlehem!
Come and behold him born the king of angels!
O come, let us adore him! O come, let us adore him!
O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!**

**Sing, choirs of angels! Sing in exultation! Sing, all ye citizens of heaven above!
Glory to God in the highest!
O come, let us adore him! O come, let us adore him!
O come, let us adore him, Christ, the Lord!**

GREETING

Tonight we celebrate the nativity of our Lord!
The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all!
And also with you!

CAROL OF PRAISE

Angels, from the Realms of Glory

ELW # 275, vss. 1 & 4

**Angels, from the realms of glory, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
once you sang creation's story; now proclaim Messiah's birth:**

Come and worship! Come and worship! Worship Christ, the newborn king!

**All creation, join in praising God, the Father, Spirit, Son,
Evermore your voices raising to the eternal Three in One.**

Come and worship! Come and worship! Worship Christ, the newborn king!

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray. (*a brief silence*)

Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light.
Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence
and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory;
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit,
ne God, now and forever.

Amen

Word

FIRST READING: Isaiah 9:2, 6 –7

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
those who lived in a land of deep darkness – on them light has shined....
For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders;
and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
His authority shall grow continually, and there shall be endless peace
for the throne of David and his kingdom.
He will establish and uphold it with justice and with righteousness
from this time onward and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Word of God! Word of life!
Thanks be to God!

PSALM CAROL

Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming

ELW # 272, vss. 1-2

**Lo, how a rose e'er blooming from tender stem hath sprung!
Of Jesse's lineage coming as seers of old have sung,
it came, a flow'r so bright, amid the cold of winter,
when half-spent was the night.**

**Isaiah had foretold it, the rose I have in mind;
with Mary we behold it, the virgin mother kind.
To show God's love aright, she bore to us a Savior,
when half-spent was the night.**

SECOND READING: Hebrews 1:1-3a

¹Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being....

Word of God! Word of life!
Thanks be to God!

GOSPEL ANNOUNCEMENT

The Holy Gospel according to Luke!

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION CAROL **Angels We Have Heard on High** **ELW # 289, vs. 1**

**Angels we have heard on high, sweetly singing o'er the plains,
And the mountains in reply, echoing their joyous strains.
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

GOSPEL: Luke 2:1-20

¹In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. ²This was the first registration and was taken while Quirinius was governor of Syria. ³All went to their own towns to be registered. ⁴Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem, because he was descended from the house and family of David. ⁵He went to be registered with Mary, to whom he was engaged and who was expecting a child. ⁶While they were there, the time came for her to deliver her child. ⁷And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see — I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger". ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace among those whom God favors!"

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

GOSPEL ANNOUNCEMENT

The Gospel of our Lord!

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION CAROL **Angels We Have Heard on High** **ELW # 289, vs.3**

**Come to Bethlehem and see him whose birth the angels sing;
come, adore on bended knee Christ the Lord, the newborn king.
Gloria in excelsis Deo; Gloria in excelsis Deo.**

CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

CAROL OF THE DAY

On Christmas Night

ELW # 274, vss. 1 & 4

**On Christmas night all Christians sing to hear the news the angels bring.
On Christmas night all Christians sing to hear the news the angels bring:
news of great joy, news of great mirth, news of our merciful king's birth.**

**All out of darkness we have light, which made the angels sing this night.
All out of darkness we have light, which made the angels sing this night:
"Glory to God in highest heav'n; peace on earth, and goodwill. Amen"**

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH FOR CHRISTMAS

Let us affirm our faith together:

**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
Through the Word came creation in all its fullness and life in all its abundance,
light shining in the darkness.**

**The Word became flesh and dwells among us,
the glory of the One and Only, full of grace and truth.
From the fullness of this grace we all receive countless blessings, one after another.**

**To all who receive the Word, to those who believe in Jesus Christ,
is given the power to become children of God and on them is bestowed the Holy Spirit.**

**Because Christ lives, we know that we, too, shall live,
to the glory of God the Creator, God the Redeemer, and God the Sustainer.
Amen**

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Leader:

As members and friends of Salem Church, let us remind ourselves why we are here:

We are a community of Christian disciples called by the Holy Spirit.

In response to God's transforming love, we share our joy through praise and service.

May it be so!

Amen!

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Gathered with all who seek the Christ child,
let us pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

Individual worshipers are invited to offer the petitions as so moved by the Spirit.

Wonderful counselor, on this holy night
your church throughout the world celebrates the Word of God being born among us.
Endow your church with a zeal for sharing your love and grace with all.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Lord of hosts, the heavens are glad, the earth rejoices, and the trees sing for joy at your coming.
Grant us wisdom to care for your creation in ways that benefit all of your creatures.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Prince of peace, your grace has appeared and brings salvation to all.
Bring healing to people and nations divided by violence.
Direct the leaders of the nations, so that in self-controlled, upright, and godly living,
they may work toward peace.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Mighty God of mercy, you come among us as a vulnerable infant.
Protect all in need: those without homes or caregivers, those who grieve, all who are hungry,
and all who are ill, especially for Andrea, Audry, Barbara, Bud, Jerry, David, Diane, Dolores,
Eron, Grace, Hazel, Jacob, Jana, Katherine, Liz, Maria, Martha, Millicent, Ron, Sarah, Steve,
and all we name in our hearts.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Gracious God, we praise you for gathering us tonight to worship in holy splendor.
Direct our worship, fellowship, and service,
so that our lives and Christian witness may be pleasing to you.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Everlasting God, your steadfast love never ends.
Thank you for revealing your faithfulness & love to us through the saints of every time & place.
Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You are invited to offer your own prayer petition at this time, either silently or aloud.

The pastor then concludes:

Into your hands we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy;
through Christ, our Lord. **Amen**

Thanksgiving

OFFERING PRAYER

Jesus, you said, "Give & it will be given to you...
for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

**Give us the confidence to cheerfully give our tithes & offerings of time, talent & treasure to your work in this place, trusting that you will provide abundantly for all our needs.
We pray this in the power of your Spirit. Amen**



OFFERING

In response to God's grace, it is our joy to return to God our tithes and offerings. Although our building at 3160 Park Avenue in Bridgeport, CT is closed at present, our ministry continues because of your generosity.

If you are watching and are part of another faith community, we encourage you to give your tithes to your own church first, and, if in addition to that, you would like to support our work here at Salem, we would be most grateful.

Simply go to the menu on our website at SalemBridgeport.org and click "donate" or scan the QR code here in our Sunday worship program with a QR reader on your smart phone which will take you to that page.

OFFERTORY CAROL

What Child Is This

ELW # 296, vss. 1 & 3

**What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mary's lap is sleeping?
Who angels greet with anthems sweet while shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the king, whom shepherds guard and angels sing;
haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mary!**

**So bring him incense, gold, and myrrh; come peasant, king, to own him.
The King of kings salvation brings; let loving hearts enthrone him.
Raise, raise the song on high, the virgin sings her lullaby;
joy, joy, for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mary!**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen**

Gathering in the Nave

At this point we welcome you to come into the Nave for a brief service of Holy Communion and Candle-lighting Liturgy. Please make sure you have your mask on before exiting your vehicle, and maintain 6 feet distance from others.

If you prefer not to come inside the building, you are welcome to continue to worship in your vehicles.

While we will be ending our Livestream, those of you in our parking lot will still be able to hear the service on your radios. At the end of the service, after those who have gathered indoors have picked up their prepackaged individual communion kits and candles on their way out of the building, you may come to the door to get your communion elements and candles. And then we will conclude our worship with the singing of Silent Night, either outdoors or in your vehicles, depending upon the weather.

Before the Blessing and Dismissal of our cyberspace worshippers, let me remind you that this Sunday morning at 9:30 we will be joining Lutherans and others from all across New England and beyond in a service of Lessons and Carols.

You may find that service on our Facebook page, SalemBridgeport, and also on our YouTube Channel, Salem Lutheran Church Bridgeport CT.

Also on Sunday we will be gathering at 6:00 pm on Zoom for our Sunday Night Alive “The Gifts of Christmas” event. You can find that link on our calendar under the Resources tab on our website, SalemBridgeport.org.

Sending

of cyberspace worshippers

Now as we end the live-streamed portion of our worship, I want to especially thank those of you out there in cyberspace who have joined us.

Know that God drew you to this worship for a reason.

Know that no matter what challenges you face,

God not only has the power to help you,

God loves you enough to use that power in your life.

I hope you will join us again.

And in the meantime,

may your life shine with the brightness of stars and angels! Amen

Carols While We Gather Inside

*(You may sing in your cars,
or simply listen as you enter the building.)*

That Boy-Child of Mary Was Born in a Stable ELW #293, TFbF #54

Refrain:

That boy-child of Mary was born in a stable, a manger his cradle in Bethlehem.

- 1. What shall we call him, child of the manger? What name is given in Bethlehem? (Refrain)**
- 2. His name is Jesus, God ever with us, God given for us in Bethlehem. (Refrain)**
- 3. How can he save us, how can he help us, born here among us in Bethlehem? (Refrain)**
- 4. Gift of the Father, to human mother, makes him our brother in Bethlehem. (Refrain)**
- 5. One with the Father, he is our Savior, heaven-sent helper in Bethlehem. (Refrain)**
- 6. Gladly we praise him, love and adore him, give ourselves to him in Bethlehem. (Refrain)**

Text: based on Luke 2.7, 21 by Tom Colvin, 1925-2000; Text Meter: 5 5 5 4 and refrain

Music: BLANTYRE, Malawi traditional, adapt. Tom Colvin

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Jesus, What a Wonderful Child ELW # 297, TFbF #51

**Jesus, Jesus, oh, what a wonderful child. Jesus, Jesus, so holy, meek, and mild;
new life, new hope the child will bring. Listen to the angels sing:
"Glory, glory, glory," let the heavens ring!**

Text: based on Luke 2.13-14; African American traditional, alt.; Text Meter: PM

Music: WONDERFUL CHILD; African American traditional;

arr. Jeffrey Radford from The New Century Hymnal, © 1992 Pilgrim Press

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Meal

COMMUNION

PREFACE DIALOG

God be with you!
And also with you!

Open your hearts!
We open them to God and one another!

Let us give thanks to the God of all!
It is right to give God thanks and praise!

PROPER PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy,
that we should at all times and in all places give thanks and praise to you,
almighty and merciful God, through our Savior Jesus Christ.

In the wonder and mystery of the Word made flesh
you have opened the eyes of faith to a new and radiant vision of your glory;
that, beholding the God made visible, we may be drawn to love the God whom we cannot see.

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

In the night in which he was betrayed...

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest, and let these gifts to us be blessed.
Blessed be God, who is our Bread; may all the world be clothed and fed. Amen

The body of Christ given for you.
The blood of Christ shed for you.

BLESSING AFTER COMMUNION

The body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you & keep you in divine grace! **Amen**

ADVENT WREATH CANDLELIGHTING (YEAR B – CHRISTMAS EVE – CHRIST)

LIGHTING THE WAY

Leader: The Lord be with you!

People: **And also with you!**

Leader: We gather to celebrate the birth of the one who is the light of the world.

People: **We are here to worship God - and his Son Jesus –
born this night in Bethlehem of Judea.**

Leader: We light the candle of hope to remind us of the promises made by all the prophets that God would raise up a savior for his people Israel.

People: **Christ is our hope and our salvation.
He calls us to share our hope in him with each other.**



(Light the 1st candle.)

Leader: We light the candle of peace to remind us that it is only with God and by following in his path that true peace can be found.

People: **Christ brings the peace of God to us.
He calls us to share the peace he gives with each other.**



(Light the 2nd candle.)

Leader: We light the candle of joy to remind us that God gives joy to every heart that abides in him.

People: **As Mary rejoiced in the birth of Jesus - so his birth in us brings us joy.
God calls us to share the joy he gives with each other.**



(Light the 3rd candle.)

Leader: We light the candle of love to remind us that Jesus is God's gift of love to us – and that in him, the light of love triumphs over darkness.

People: **Love never fails - it transforms all those who give it and receive it.
God calls us to share his love with each other.**



(Light the 4th candle.)

LIGHTING THE CHRIST CANDLE

Leader: We light the Christ candle to remind us that the light of the world was born this night.

(Light the Christ Candle.)



Leader: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

People: **Those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness – on them a light has shined.**

Leader: You, O Lord, have multiplied the nation. You have increased its joy.

People: **For to us a child is born, to us a son is given,
and the government shall be upon his shoulder.**

Leader: His name shall be called

Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

People: **He is also called Emmanuel, for in him God is with us.**

Pastor: Let us pray.

(a brief silence)

Almighty God,

People: **you have made this night holy by the gift of your son,
born of the Holy Spirit and of Mary.**

Upon him rested all your grace, through him has come all your mercy.

**Let his light shine within our hearts tonight even more brightly
than it shines from the candles in this place.**

Help us to hear your word and to celebrate your everlasting love through him.

Amen

Sending

of remaining worshippers

BLESSING

May Christ who came to be born in Bethlehem
be born anew in your heart this night.

Amen

LIGHTING OF THE CANDLES

*The ushers will give you a candle and your communion pack
as you exit the sanctuary.*

*Depending on the weather,
they may give you either a lighted candle
or a battery powered votive candle.*

- 1. Silent night, holy night!
All is calm, all is bright
Round yon virgin mother and child.
Holy Infant, so tender and mild,
Sleep in heavenly peace,
Sleep in heavenly peace.**

- 2. Silent night, holy night!
Shepherds quake at the sight;
Glories stream from heave afar,
Heav'nly hosts...sing, Alleluia!
Christ, the Savior, is born!
Christ, the Savior, is born!**

- 3. Silent night, holy night!
Son of God, love's pure light
Radiant beams from your holy face,
With the dawn of redeeming grace,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth,
Jesus, Lord, at your birth.**

SENDING

**Glory to God in the highest!
And peace to God's people on earth!**

**Go in peace, knowing that Christ has been born in your heart this day!
Thanks be to God!**

POSTLUDE

Announcements

Sunday December 27th, we will be joining other congregations in the New England Synod in an online service of Lessons and Carols which will premiere on our FB page at 9:30.

Our next SUNDAY NIGHT ALIVE event will take place this Sunday December 27th at 6:00 pm on Zoom. We'll be watching the first half of our hour-long video, "The Gifts of Christmas", a compilation of the readings and the gifts that were shared as part of our Video Advent Calendar. If you didn't get to see all of our daily video posts this month, this is your chance to catch up. And even if you didn't miss a day, you won't want to miss this chance to gather together on zoom to remember, to celebrate, and to share some laughter and love. You can find the link on our website, SalemBridgeport.org, by clicking on the Resources tab, then Calendar, and then going to the event. Or you can simply click on this link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82224426828?pwd=aTNKcUE4eEdINEliYIFVd1RnYlIXQT09>

Online Worship will be the norm until it is deemed safe to once again gather in-person indoors. *Salem members, if you are not able to join us online from your home, please contact either me or our parish nurse so we might facilitate your participation.* Perhaps we can loan you a digital tablet and teach you to use it, or provide a place for you to safely watch our service outside your home. No matter how we worship, we'll stream to FacebookLive and post to our YouTube channel.

There are many ways to find the zoom link for worship and all other Salem events.

The most reliable way is to go to our website - www.salembridgeport.org, choose the Resource tab, and click on Calendar. Then on the calendar, go to the day, the event, and when you click on it, it will open up the zoom invitation. You can click on the link, or copy and paste it into your browser. To see how to do this, **click here**:

We also include the zoom links in our weekly email blasts, and in this announcement section of our Sunday bulletin. You can find links to Sunday worship materials like the bulletin, sermon, and donate page at www.salembridgeport.org/live. Or to see how to get there, **click here**:

Lord, Teach Us to Pray! Want to know how to pray? Want to see how prayer can change your life? Need prayer? Then join us each **Wednesday** on zoom at **noon** for a half-hour as we delve more deeply into the Lord's Prayer, and pray for each other's needs. The zoom link will be on the calendar on Salem's website at Salembridgeport.org under the Resources Tab.

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.

Salem and Friends Prayer Gathering & Take-out Breakfast, sponsored by the Salem Men, is held outdoors in the picnic grove on the 2nd Saturday of the month at 8:00.

Inner-View Chat'n'Chew meets the 3rd 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.

Sunday Night Alive events continue the last Sunday of the month, normally at 6 pm! There are other exciting plans ahead. Stay tuned!

The Search Is on...for Audio & Video Recordings of Salem's Choir! Do you have an old VHS tape or DVD or other video recording of the Salem Choir? Do you have an old reel-to-reel or 8-track or cassette audio recording? Did you ever film the choir with your phone? Or what about recordings of Lucia or our children's musical productions? We'd love to build up a digital library of Salem's musical treasures. Since singing increases significantly the amount and projection of the aerosols we produce when we breathe or speak, in-person singing is a high-risk activity which we cannot in good conscience allow for the duration of the pandemic, but we would dearly love to enjoy music in other ways. If you have any such recordings, please contact our Office Manager Karl by emailing him (salemsec123@sbcglobal.net) or calling the church and leaving a message (203-336-3300). We will figure out how to convert and copy your recordings so that we can all enjoy them. **We're especially looking for recordings we could use for Christmas** or Easter or other special days.

A whole buffet of worship opportunities – just for you! Every single one of us would no doubt like to go back to the way we worshipped pre-pandemic, but sadly that is not a possibility for now. God is GOOD, however, and has provided so many other ways for us to worship. Even if we get to Phase 3, there are those in our church family who due to health concerns are not able to gather with us indoors and have requested that we have zoom services sometimes. When the weather is too cold to keep windows open for ventilation or when the roads are too snowy, or if we are in Phase 1 or 2, or if someone worshipping tests positive for Covid and we need to self-quarantine, we'll be worshipping via zoom. When the pastor is on vacation, there will be pre-recorded services on Facebook and YouTube. While each one of us has our preferences, remember that we are a community in Christ who loves and looks out for one another. When we're worshipping your favorite way give thanks! And when we're worshipping in someone else's favorite way, give thanks for that, too!

Online Worship – Online worship is here to stay. Far more people participate in our worship online than come to worship on our property or even join us on zoom. In fact, up to 8 times as many as those gathered physically watch the entire service online, and many weeks we have over a thousand people who at least watch some of it! So no matter what format we use for worship in the future, we plan to stream via Facebook Live. 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 also 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.

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Pastor Marjo and Salem's Office Manager, Karl, work primarily from their homes but generally come in once a week to take care of tasks that cannot be accomplished remotely. Even though we must operate differently in these times, if we can help in any way, please know that you can still call Salem's church office at 203-330-3300 and leave a message and your message will be picked up remotely and your call returned. Please also do not hesitate to call or text Pastor Marjo at 203-982-3441.

Need help finding a Salem zoom meeting or need to set one up? Just go to our website at SalemBridgeport.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 or by leaving a message on the church phone, 203-336-3300.

Technology have you stumped? If you'd like some (VERY BASIC!) technology help – like accessing zoom on your iPhone, tablet, or pc, or downloading and using the Venmo or Cash app, or anything else, please speak with Pastor Marjo or call or email Karl.

COMMEMORATIONS FOR THE WEEK

Stephen, Deacon and Martyr
Saturday, December 26, 2020

Stephen was a deacon and the first martyr of the church. He was one of those seven upon whom the apostles laid hands after they had been chosen to serve widows and others in need. Later, Stephen's preaching angered the temple authorities, and they ordered him to be put to death by stoning.

THE COUNCIL OF CHURCHES OF GREATER BRIDGEPORT

*If you're reading this online, just click on the underlined links for details.
Or go to CCGB.org*

WHY DO WE ADVOCATE FOR CHANGE?

- [Why Advocacy - A Study Guide for Congregations](#)

The Council of Churches and our member congregations have prioritized the issues listed below for our advocacy efforts. Policy changes in these areas will have an immediate, positive effect on our communities and the neighbors we serve.

Climate Change

learn about how addressing food insecurity and reducing our food waste can make a huge difference

- [Combatting Food Insecurity](#)
- [Ways to Reduce Food Waste](#)
- [Articles from Earth Day 2020](#)

Criminal Justice Reform

help us pass the Clean Slate bill and give people a real second chance

- [Clean Slate Bill - A Study Guide for Congregations](#)

Education Equity

all children in Bridgeport and beyond deserve a quality education

- [Call to Action](#)
- [CCGB's Goals and Initiatives](#)
- [Education Reform - A Study Guide for Congregations](#)

Immigration Reform

how shall we "welcome the stranger" with respect and care?

Gun Violence Prevention

"do not stand idly by while your neighbor's blood is shed" Leviticus 19:16

- [Overview of Resources](#)
- [Do Not Stand Idly By Campaign](#)
- [Congregational Toolkit \(PCUSA\)](#)

Resources on the CT Legislature

Here you can find basic guides, templates and resources for raising your voice and getting involved!

- [Guide to Written Testimony for a Public Hearing on CT Legislation.pdf](#)
- [How a CT Bill Becomes Law.pdf](#)

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 17**, 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://default.salsalabs.org/T4ca0bc4e-b5a6-457f-9432-5f3e459aaaa6/464704ca-cfbd-4af1-9836-dc2cefbf86ab> - & 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://default.salsalabs.org/T6ccaac28-05da-4baf-88a8-d1c2b9b86893/464704ca-cfbd-4af1-9836-dc2cefbf86ab> - 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?ga=2.119362624.853575714.1565027421-1958052405.1536241629 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.*