



September

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SPiRiT

Salem Lutheran Church

shalom - salaam - salem - peace

A Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Congregation

The Spirit Is on the Move in Bridgeport!!!

A major shift in understanding has occurred in the Church over the last 20 years. We have learned that the Spirit of the Living God is not confined within the Church, but is alive and moving **outside** our buildings, **outside** our congregations, and even **outside** our imaginations! The Spirit that moved across the face of the waters of chaos at the beginning of creation, the Spirit that drove the prophets, the Spirit that anointed Jesus, and the Spirit that fell on those first disciples at Pentecost cannot be tamed or chained or contained! That means that the task for us Christians, both individually and collectively, is to discern where the Spirit is working, discern how the Spirit is inviting us into that work, and then to jump in and give it our all. With that as background, let me tell you that I have never in my life seen the Spirit working as powerfully as I have this summer here in Bridgeport and its environs.

On Saturday July 23rd, 150 Christians gathered to ensure that all 1,081 streets in the City of Bridgeport were walked & prayed over.

The **Prayer Walk** was organized with the help of Saturate Bridgeport, part of Saturate USA, an organization whose purpose is to help Christians carry out Jesus' Great Commission to spread the Gospel to all the world. After the Prayer Walk, those 150 people assembled in Washington Park for a **Prayer Gathering**. The fire chief, police chief, city councilman, state representative, city clerk, and mayor joined us. The police chief testified to her faith, sharing that as she began her job she and her spiritual support team discerned through prayer that they needed to pray at 7 locations in the city, the last of those being the very spot at which we then stood. The mayor arrived late, and as he entered the park he heard someone praying for him and his family and was moved to tears. We pastors had signed a prayer certificate which was presented to the mayor, and as it was read to him, he broke down, sobbing in the arms of Pastor Gabrielle Beam, as they sank to the ground on their knees. Since that day the mayor has been telling everyone about his "God-encounter" and has been in nearly constant contact with pastors as he discerns where God is leading him and Bridgeport.

That next week, many volunteers including our own **Jean Larson, Nancy Headford, Sandra Brown, Bruce & Diane Tomasko, & me,**

gathered every morning at 10:00 to set up in Washington Park for a **Vacation Bible Camp** from 12:00-4:00, offered free to any child age 4-12 in Bridgeport. It was sponsored by 4 faith and education non-profit organizations brought together by the Luis Palau Association's CityServe initiative – Rise to Read, Elevate, FaithActs for Education, and the Faith and Education Coalition. The theme was Powering Up – and taught the children that God is able to work through even the least of us to accomplish amazing things, the perfect message for these children who hear a very different message from society. The content was Christian and it was also educational, moving children through 4 different reading stations (phonics, sight words, etc.), math, and fun and games. The goal was to reach 100 children and their families, and it exceeded that goal. Over half of those 100 children had never heard the good news of God's love made known to us through Jesus Christ, but all heard it there and they and their families were provided with

connections to local congregations. Another Vacation Bible Camp was offered a few weeks later for those whose primary language was Spanish.

Then on Saturday-Sunday August 27th-28th, there was **CityFest** at Seaside Park in Bridgeport, a region-wide movement focused on serving the region and proclaiming the Good News through an outdoor, family festival to celebrate and share the gospel! It came about as a result of years of prayer & planning by dozens of leaders in Fairfield and New Haven Counties and the surrounding Southwestern Connecticut area. The vision is to see the Christian community come together in greater unity, service, and proclamation – showing the community the joy, peace, and love of Jesus Christ.

The CityFest event was a monumental extravaganza that far exceeded my already huge expectation. How big was it? Well.... there were THOUSANDS there – including Mayor Ganim, State Senator Richard Blumenthal, and Governor Ned Lamont! There were top-drawer musical artists and bands, Evil Kneival-type motorcycle stunts, a Kids' Blitz stage show like something you'd see on television, a fun zone with inflatables, face-painting, and other fun and games, & all kinds of food & other vendors. And on top of all that, the gospel was preached, and just like in the book of Acts, people were invited to follow Jesus. There were hundreds of people who raised their hand for prayer each night, & there were volunteers to meet everyone, to pray for their needs, & to make sure they were put in contact with a church who could continue to minister to them. How did all of this happen? Through the power of the Holy Spirit, of course! The Spirit has worked through the Luis Palau Association to bring together 175 congregations across racial, ethnic, & denominational lines, along with social service agencies, justice advocacy groups, governmental departments, & businesses, including Coca-Cola, Buttafuccho, Splash Car Wash, Beverages Northeast, Valley Container, Eingedi Spring, K-Love, RD Scinto, 96.7 Air1 Worship Now, and Rep the Gospel, a clothing company founded by Pastor Dexter Upshaw of New Vision International Ministries. Yes, if you have any doubt that the Spirit was at work, just ask **Cindy Roberts** or me or anyone else who was there. It was POWERFUL!

But here's the best news of all, CityFest was not the culmination of all this work, but simply the "launch party" for **CityServe**, through which we with all of these congregations and partners will continue our work of bringing the love of God through Christ Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit to each and every one of God's children in Bridgeport and beyond! Together, as the Body of Christ, we can celebrate and accelerate the work of the Church, influencing culture, changing lives, and setting hearts ablaze with the fire of the Spirit.

Hallelujah! Praise God! And abundant blessings be yours!

Pastor Marjo

Pastor Marjo Anderson

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

Website - www.salembridgeport.org

Facebook - www.facebook.com/SalemBridgeport/

Church Office Hours

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

Worship Services

Sunday 9:30am In Person Worship

Salem's Staff

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

Karl Kraft, Office Manager
Office Phone (203) 336-3300

LEADERSHIP AT SALEM

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

Barbara
Benedette
Christiane
Dolores
Frank
Grace
Jonathan
Linda
Steve
and all we name in our hearts.

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