



December 2022

the
SPIRIT

Salem Lutheran Church

shalom - salaam - salem - peace

A Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Congregation

Candles for Christ

Dear Salem family,

One of the things I look forward to each year is the first Sunday of Advent when I get to turn on the candles in all the windows of our house. They fill our home with a soft light that makes me feel safe and warm. But what with one thing and another, I have been so busy that I completely forgot to turn them on this year! So as soon as I'm finished writing this article, that's what I'm going to do: light the candles!

Last Sunday at worship after the lighting of the first candle on our Advent wreath, I asked that we think of ourselves as candles, and commissioned us all to be candles of hope for the week. Starting this coming Sunday, we'll be candles of peace, the next week candles of joy, and then candles of love. (See pages 3-6)

As candles, we don't light ourselves, of course. It is Jesus, our Light in the Darkness, who lights up our lives, sets our hearts on fire, and sets our spirits ablaze. There is a song I love that talks about Jesus being "...light in the darkness..." Those words repeat over and over, and are joined with others, as in a dance, "*Way Maker! Miracle Worker! Promise Keeper! Light in the Darkness! My God, that is who You are!*"

Isn't that what we all long for? Someone to make a Way where we can't see anyway forward.... Someone to work miracles in our lives when we've tried everything and nothing seems to work.... Someone we can trust to keep their promise to love us with a love that will never ever fail....

And of course, we already have all of those things. Sometimes we just need to be reminded of that fact. We already know the Way. That Way is Jesus. And we – WE! – are People of the Way! We don't have to wait for a way to be made, because Jesus makes a way for us each moment of our lives. We don't have to wait for a miracle, because miracles are happening all around us all the time. We don't

have to wait for God to keep God's promise, because those promises are fulfilled each and every time we choose faith over fear. And we don't have to wait for light to see – all we need to do is to open our eyes!

The verses to Way Maker remind us of the overarching Truth of our lives – that God is *HERE moving in our midst, working in whatever place we find ourselves, touching, healing, and mending every heart, and turning our lives around.*

And our response to that God moving in our midst? It can only be, "*I worship you! I worship you!*"

Sure, there are too many times when we may not see God working, we may not feel God working, but even when we can't see it or feel it, the truth is that God never, ever, ever stops working.

If you don't know this song, you can find it right here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iJCV_2H9xD0 I encourage you, not just to listen to it, but to pray it. Pray it and let it seep deep into your soul. Pray it until you believe it, not just with your head but with your heart.

In the midst of whatever you are going through, God is right there with you, moving and working in your life, touching, healing, and mending every hurt, your Way Maker, your Miracle Worker, your Promise Keeper, and your Light in the Darkness.

And for that I give God thanks and praise!

Pastor Marjo

Pastor Marjo Anderson

CCLI Song # 7115744

Osinachi Kalu Okoro Egbu

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Church Office Hours

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

Worship Services

Sunday 9:30am In Person Worship

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LEADERSHIP AT SALEM

COUNCIL

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Steve Kuczo
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Tom Larson
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MITTEN TREE

While we will not have an actual mitten tree this year, we will be collecting mittens, gloves, hats and scarves as usual. There will be a box in the narthex on Sunday mornings for contributions. Items can also be dropped off at the office on Thursdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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

Barbara
Bernedette
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 **December 15th** for the January issue!

Email submissions to
salemsec123@sbcglobal.net

THE ADVENT WREATH CANDLELIGHTING

(Candle lighting liturgy copyright by the Rev. Richard J. Fairchild 2003)

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 - but 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.

1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT - HOPE

ADVENT READING

Today is the First Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Hope.

Our hope is in God, and in God's son, Jesus Christ.

He is the one appointed by God to be judge of all things.

He is the one through whom God has promised to save and to redeem God's people.

We light this candle today to remind us that God is our hope and the hope of the world.

We thank God for the promises God has made to us and for the light God has brought into the world.



SCRIPTURES ON HOPE

“...those who hope in God will not be disappointed.” [Isaiah 49.23b]

“For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” [Jeremiah 29.11]

“...glory even in your suffering because...suffering produces perseverance, perseverance produces character, character produces hope, and hope will not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.” [Romans 5:3b-5]

(Light the 1st candle.)

ADVENT PRAYER

Let us pray.

O God of Hope, Emmanuel, God-with-us,

we pray you to send your light into our hearts at this time.

Help us to be ready for the day and the hour of Christ's final appearing.

Live in us and help us to live in you.

so that our worship, our celebration, our time of preparation, may be pleasing to you, both now and forevermore. **Amen**

2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT - PEACE



ADVENT READING

Today is the Second Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Peace. Our peace is found in God and in God's son, Jesus Christ. John the Baptist and all the prophets remind us, that to receive peace we must be prepared for it. We light this candle today to remind us that Christ is the Prince of Peace, the one promised from the beginning of the world. We thank God for the hope God gives us and for the peace God bestows.

SCRIPTURES ON PEACE

"Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has compassion on you. *[Isaiah 54:10]*

"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." *[John 14:27]*

"Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts & minds in Christ Jesus." *[Philippians 4:6-7]*

(Light the 1st & 2nd candles.)

ADVENT PRAYER

Let us pray.

O God of Peace, Emmanuel, God-with-us,

we pray you to send your light into our hearts at this time.

Help us to be ready for the day and the hour of Christ's appearing.

Work in our hearts at this time and help us prepare ourselves for the peace that Christ brings, the inner peace that tells us that we are united with you

and the outer peace which will come when Christ returns to judge the world. **Amen**

3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT - JOY



ADVENT READING

Today is the third Sunday of Advent, the Sunday of Joy.
Our joy is in God and in God's son, Jesus Christ.
Like peace, joy is a gift from God.
It overtakes us and fills us
when we remember what God has done and what God has promised to do.
We light this candle to remind us that Christ came, and is coming,
so that all people might have a rich and abundant life.
We thank God for the hope God gives us,
for the peace God bestows,
and for the joy God pours into our hearts.

SCRIPTURES ON JOY

"You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy;
at your right hand are pleasures forevermore." [Psalm 16:11]

"For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning." [Psalm 30:5]

"May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him,
so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." [Romans 15:13]

(Light the 1st, 2nd & 3rd candles.)

ADVENT PRAYER

Let us pray.
O God of Joy, Emmanuel, God-with-us, send your light into our hearts at this time.
Help us to be ready for the time of Christ's appearing.
Fix our hearts and our minds upon those things you have done
and those you have promised to do
that we may have the joy you have promised.
Strengthen us so that we may always do your will
and so bless you and the world you have made. **Amen**

