



January 2023

the
SPIRIT

Salem Lutheran Church

shalom - salaam - salem - peace

A Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Congregation

What's New? (about You?)

It's a brand new year! And that's exciting! No matter what challenges you faced in 2022, God has brought you through them to 2023 – and for that we give God thanks and praise!

The new year always brings with it the grace to leave the past behind, and to be refreshed and begin anew. But for some reason that I can't exactly put my finger on, I am filled with an even greater sense of excitement and enthusiasm over the start of this new year than ever before! Perhaps it is because my faith has grown and so I trust in God's love and power more. Perhaps it's that in my time with God I sense God's own excitement and anticipation. It's like when someone is planning a surprise party for you and while no one has let anything slip, you can just feel that there's something in the air or that someone has got something wonderful up their sleeve. Or perhaps ... it's because of the scripture verses that God has laid on my heart to share with you!

The first is from Revelation 21:5: *"The One who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making all things NEW! Write! for these words are trustworthy and true!'"* And if you think about it, of course that's true. Our universe is constantly expanding. Every cell in your body gets replaced, so that every 7 years, you have a wholly new body. No matter how much we might want things to stay the same, the only constant in life is that of change. God's very nature is to create, and so that's what God does. Each and every moment God is at work making all things new. And "ALL things" includes you! So let me ask you: **What's NEW about you?** What is new about your body? your mind? your heart? your spirit? What have you learned or experienced that has changed you? What new insights and opportunities have you been given that have made a difference in your life? However you answer those questions – and I DO hope you will take the time to do so – I hope you are thanking and praising God for all the new things – whether they are things you consider positive or things you consider negative, because however you perceive those things that are new, remember that it is God who is behind them. The verse doesn't say, "Those human beings are making all things new". NO! It is GOD who is making all things new. And because we trust that God loves us, we know that no matter how uncomfortable the newness may feel at times, it is ultimately God's good gift to us.

The second verse is from Isaiah 64:8: *"Yet you, God, are our Creator. We are the clay; you are the potter. Every single one of us is the work of your hand."* This verse continues the theme of the one above, but it focuses exclusively on God's creative work on us humans. If you've ever seen a potter at work, you know there are times when the potter is spinning the wheel but the vase is not shaping up

quite the way she intended, so she'll stop, squash the clay down and begin again. Sometimes things happen in our life and we feel like we're being squashed down and utterly destroyed, but we needn't fear, for it's just what the Potter needs to do in order to make us into all that the Potter has dreamed.

The third verse is from Romans 12:2: *"Do not conform to the pattern of the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to see that God's will is good, acceptable and perfect."* The key to facing the future with eagerness, excitement, and enthusiasm is to let go of what we want, or what friends and family want, or what culture wants, and instead get on board with what God's wants.

These verses make clear that it's not about us changing ourselves. We don't have the power to make things new – whether we're talking about our individual lives, or our family, or our congregation, or our community, or our denomination, or our world. The only One with the power to make all things new is God. And that's a wonderful word of grace because we don't have to be the ones to come up with the changes or the answers or the solutions that will fix our lives or our church or our world. We simply have to remember that we are the clay and God is the Potter. It is not our job to transform our own life or the lives of anyone else, but rather to ALLOW God to transform us, & work THROUGH us to transform the world around us.

My prayer for each one of us this year is that we will present ourselves to God, not as dried out clay, but as extremely moldable clay. So spend more time in prayer. Join us on Wednesdays on zoom at noon so that we can pray together. Spend more time in Bible Study. Join us on Wednesdays on zoom at 6:30 so we can study together. That's how we become moldable. And once we are moldable, God will be able to do — both in our individual lives & in our life together — far more than we can ask or imagine. God is at this very moment making all things new! And I can't wait to see how it all turns out!

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

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Steve Kuczo
Carol Lansing
Tom Larson
Cindy Roberts
Bill Winter

Many thanks to all who contributed to the “mitten tree” this year. The nearly 60 items collected were distributed to The Center for Family Justice and The Council of Churches. They were pleased to receive the hats, gloves and scarves. Your generosity is very much appreciated.

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 **January 15th** for the February issue!

Email submissions to
salemsec123@sbcglobal.net



January 2023

Salem Lutheran Church



SUN Jan 1	MON 2	TUE 3	WED 4	THU 5	FRI 6	SAT 7
Christmas 1 Name of Jesus <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am In Person Worship 10:30am Forward on the FIRST 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4pm S CT Rostered Ldrs Mtg on Anti-Racism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and 12pm Book Club 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 6:30pm Bible Study on ACTS 		Epiphany of Our Lord <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center 	
8 Baptism of Our Lord / Epiphany 1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am In Person Worship 4pm Southern CT Conference COLLABORATI 	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4pm S CT Rostered Ldrs Mtg on Anti-Racism 6:30pm Social Ministry Committee Meeting 	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and 6pm Stewardship Committee Meeting 	11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 6:30pm Bible Study on ACTS 	12	13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center 	14 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 8am The BREAKFAST Gathering!
15 Epiphany 2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am In Person Worship 	16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4pm S CT Rostered Ldrs Mtg on Anti-Racism 6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting 7:30pm Executive Committee Meeting 	17 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and 	18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 6:30pm Bible Study on ACTS 	19	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center 	21 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11am Inner-View Chat n Chew
22 Epiphany 3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am In Person Worship 	23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4pm S CT Rostered Ldrs Mtg on Anti-Racism 7pm Council Meeting 	24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and 	25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Lord, Teach Us to Pray 6:30pm Bible Study on ACTS 	26	27 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 6pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center 	28
29 Epiphany 4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am In Person Worship 6pm Sunday Night Alive! 	30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4pm S CT Rostered Ldrs Mtg on Anti-Racism 	31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and 				

Haley Danowski	2
Joseph Jambriska	3
David Larson	5
Elissa Velez	9
Allison Bryk	11
Barbro Lund	11
Kristin Schulz	21
Tiffany Claus	24
Eliana Llanos	24
Michael Lange	27
Elizabeth Bales	28
Jeff Johnson	29
Christiane Wolff	31



BIRTHDAYS

Thanks to Thrivent

Our Thanks to Thrivent for their generous grants supporting Salem activities. Carol and Rich Lansing have received four \$250 grants this year. We applied for the first grant for Evan Lansing's Eagle Scout project to paint Nourish Bridgeport's hydroponic farm in Bridgeport. Boy Scout Troop 103 received our second grant to help outfit the scouts' uniforms. Recently, we used the third grant to assist in preparing Seafarer gift bags. The Sterling House Food Pantry food collection on December 18 received our fourth Thrivent grant.

You can apply for two grants per year if you are a Thrivent member and one per year if you are an associate member. Please contact Rich Lansing if you wish to take advantage of your Thrivent membership in 2023.

Seafarers' Gift Bag Collection

We thank our volunteers and donors for their exceptional contribution to this year's Seafarer's Gift Bag collection. For this collection, we worked with Grace Lutheran Church. Together we collected woolen caps, sweatshirts, socks, colored t-shirts, candy, nuts, Christmas cards, and money. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church contributed their leftover items from their Seafarers' collection. A cub scout troop earned badges by packaging ten bags at Grace. On December 10, sixteen volunteers gathered at Grace Lutheran Church and packed another 38 gift bags for Seafarers. We drove the 48 bags and all the leftover items (including 45 Thrivent t-shirts) to Pastor Ruth Setaro, the New Haven Seafarers Chaplain. She will distribute our bags to those merchant sailors that come into the New Haven port.

Food Pantry Collections

Our first Salem Food Pantry Collection exceeded all expectations. Working with Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, we collected over 1,000 pounds of food and over \$818 for the Trumbull Food Bank. The workers at the food bank used the word "overwhelmed" as we kept bringing box after box of donated items to their pantry. Our thanks go to all those who contributed their time at the Stop&Shop in Fairfield. The volunteers asked shoppers for donations and gathered the gifts. Thanks also to the Larsons, Tomaskos, and Lansings for storing the items overnight and delivering them to the food pantry.

Following up on this success, we worked with Grace Lutheran Church on December 18 to collect food at the Stop&Shop on Main Street Bridgeport for the Sterling house. We collected over 1,000 pounds, over \$483, and received a \$250 gift card from Thrivent.

Plans are underway to work with Our Saviors for a collection in late spring for Operation Hope. The Trumbull Food Pantry and the Sterling House Food Pantry are asking for spring and fall collections next year. We will also be looking at working with First Presbyterian Church for weekly delivery support and a spring collection for the Bishop Jean Williams Food Pantry. This support replaces the work that members have been doing at the P. T. Barnum Food Pantry.

From our Seafarers' Chaplain

"Dear Friends, Please extend my thanks to ... Salem Lutheran Church for their participation again in our Christmas-at-Sea program. Thank you Carol and Rich for working so hard to promote this project and getting 48 satchels filled and delivered plus so many extras! Please know that everything will be delivered to ships docking here in New Haven. You have warmed many hearts and brought big smiles to seafarers far away from home and families this Christmas. Thank you so much! Joy and Peace! Ruth Setaro, Chaplain"

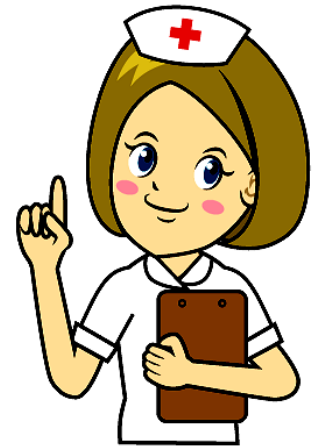
Monthly Prayer Breakfast

The second Saturday of each month is our Prayer Breakfast at 9:00 (8:00 if you'd like to help cook.) Grace Lutheran Church, 150 Chapel St, Stratford continues to generously offer us the use of their facilities for this event and we are very thankful. Please join us for food, fellowship, and spiritual discussion. And as always, it's "bring a friend" Saturday.



Stress: Coping with Everyday

Everyone has stress.. It is a normal part of life. You can feel stress in your body when you have too much to do or when you haven't slept well. You can also feel stress when you worry about things like your job, money, relationships, or a friend or family member who is ill or in crisis. In response to these strains, your body automatically increases blood pressure, heart rate, respirations, metabolism and blood flow to your muscles. This response is intended to help your body react quickly and effectively to a high pressure situation. When you are constantly reacting to stressful situations, without making adjustments, you will feel stress which can threaten your health and well-being. Nearly 70% of Americans experience physical and mental symptoms of stress, and 37% think they are doing well at managing stress. If you are feeling stress, there are steps to take better care of yourself. Learn to say NO! Eliminate activities which are not absolutely necessary



Pray - *Have a talk with God about your concerns.*

Meditate - *just 10-20 minutes of quiet reflection can bring relief from chronic stress. Use the time to listen to music, relax and try to think of pleasant things.*

Visualize - *Use your imagination to manage a stressful situation by visualizing how you would successfully accomplish it.*

Exercise - *Regular exercise is a popular way to relieve stress. 25-30 minutes daily benefits both the body and mind.*

Hobbies - *Take a break from your worries by doing something pleasurable and enjoyable. Indulge your interests, such as gardening, fishing, painting, hiking, dancing, reading or whatever...*

Share your feelings - *If you are feeling overwhelmed, talk to a friend or family member. Stay in touch. Let them provide love, advice, support and guidance. Do not try to cope alone. If you know of either yourself or someone else who may be in crisis, seek help immediately. Call 1-800-273-TALK or reach a 24 hour crisis center or dial 911 for immediate assistance.*

5 Things to check off your health care list this year

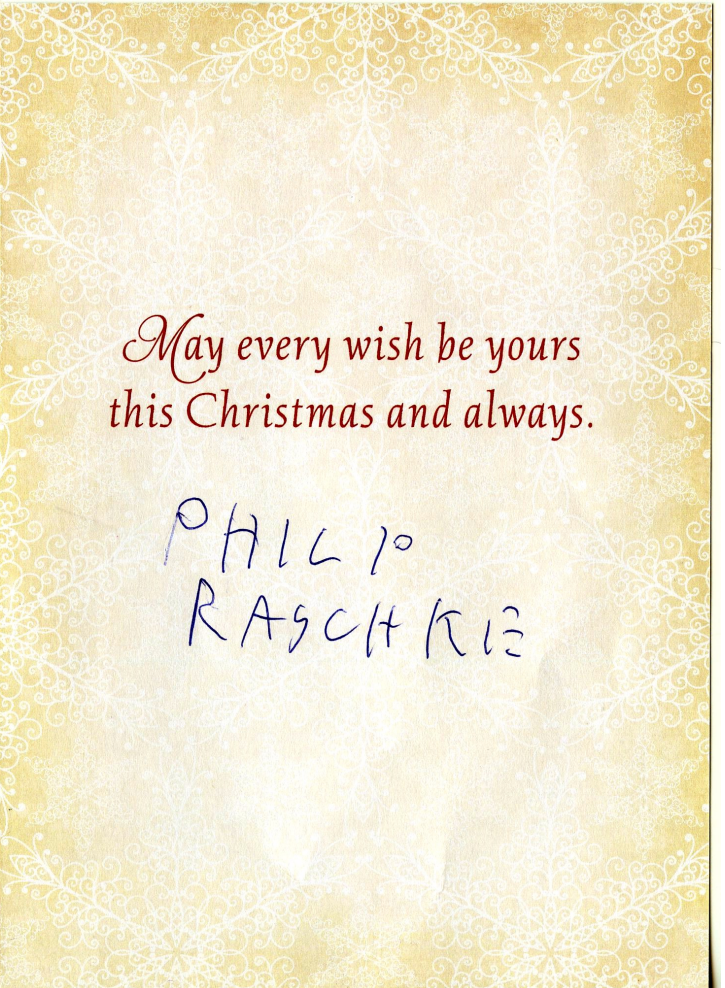
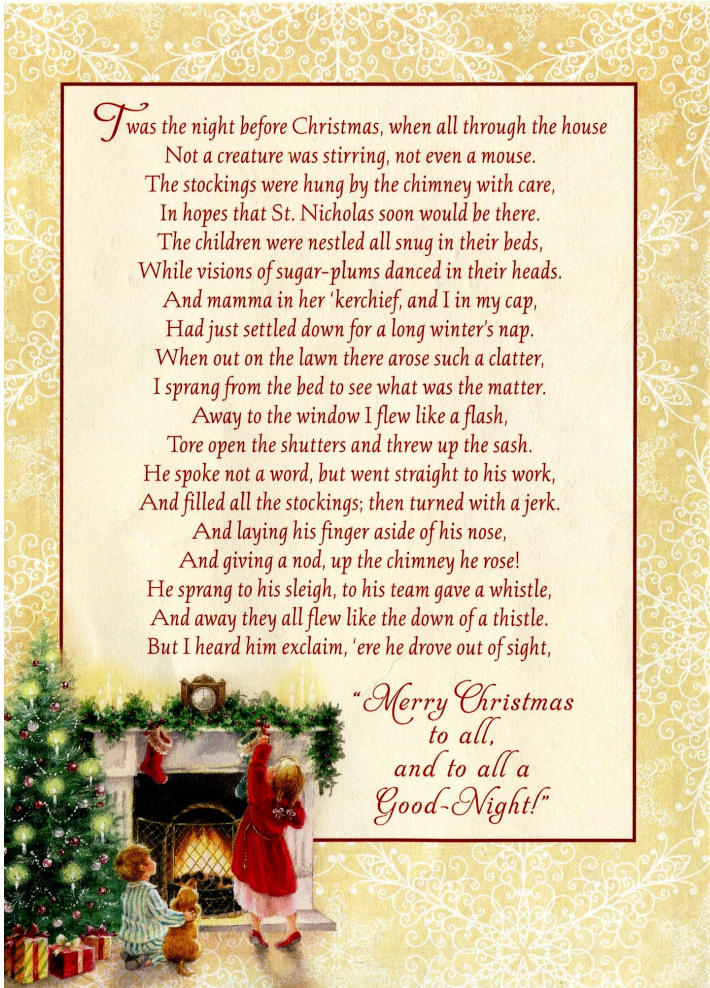
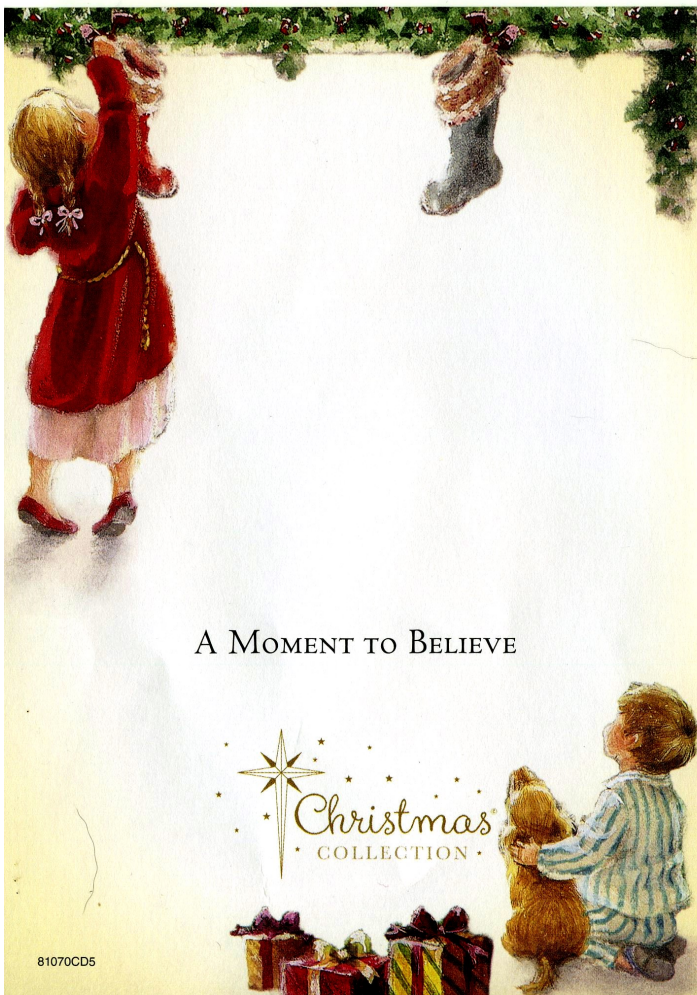
With everything going on in our lives, it may be easy to put off appointments for preventive screenings, check-ups, and immunizations. But as you get older, these visits become even more important and many of them come at no additional cost under your Medicare plan.

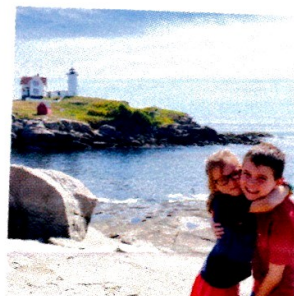
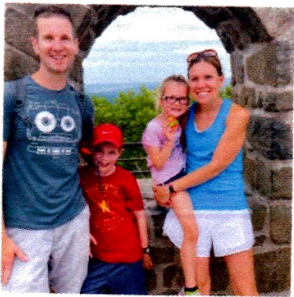
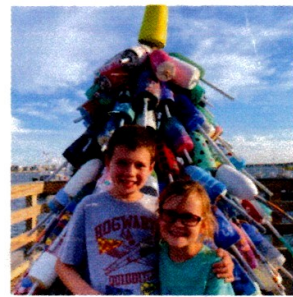
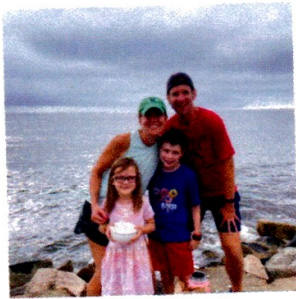
In light of the pandemic, clinics, doctor's offices, and pharmacies have health and safety protocols in place to help keep patients safe during their appointments. Make it a priority to add the following appointments to your 2023 calendar. Your long-term health may thank you.

1. **Annual Wellness Visit** – there's no additional charge under Medicare for your wellness visit.
2. **Vaccinations** –COVID-19 vaccinations are important in protecting you and those around you. Flu shots should be taken annually in the fall. Pneumonia vaccines are recommended for all adults over 65. Covid, flu and pneumonia vaccines are covered by Medicare. Shingrix vaccinations are recommended for all adults over 50 and are the best way to protect against shingles. Shingrix shots are not fully covered by Medicare.
3. **Preventive screenings and specialists** – visits for heart health, diabetes and other chronic conditions may be crucial to your overall wellness. Check with your doctor to find out which preventive screenings you need.
4. **Dental exam** – the American Dental Association recommends two dental checkups a year for your oral and overall health.
5. **Eye exam** – eye exams not only help with how well you see but can detect issues like glaucoma. You should consider an eye exam each year.

Checking off these items can help ensure that you stay as healthy as possible for all the other to-dos on your calendar.

The Connecticut Hospice, Inc. is accepting applications for new volunteers! Our patients and families are in need of your care and support. If you have an interest in companionship, light house-keeping or making meals, please contact Joan Cullen, Director of Volunteers at 203-315-7510.





merry
christmas
*The Cotters, Katie, Tim
Ryne (9), Siena (6)*



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Debra A. Greenwood

December 21, 2022

Rev. Marjo Anderson
Salem Lutheran Church
3160 Park Ave
Bridgeport, CT 06604

Dear Rev. Anderson,

Thank you and the Salem Lutheran Church community for your generous in-kind donation of **hats and gloves** received on **12/20/2022**. Your gift makes an immediate impact on restoring the lives of victims and survivors of domestic and sexual violence and child abuse by providing them with the means to live a self-sufficient life, free from abuse.

Each year, CFJ helps more than 5,500 adults and children in our communities who have been impacted by the trauma of abuse. The Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on our communities has only made the need for our services more critical than ever. With your support, we can continue to meet the demand for these essential, life-saving services and carry out our mission of transforming victims into survivors.

Thank you for letting them know that **Hope Starts Here**.

Sincerely,

Debra A. Greenwood
President and CEO
dgreenwood@centerforfamilyjustice.org
www.centerforfamilyjustice.org

The Center for Family Justice, Inc. is a non-profit charitable organization pursuant to Section 501(c)3 of the Internal Revenue Code, **EIN No. 06-0646991**. No goods and services were provided in exchange for this gift.



Hope Starts Here





Sterling House

COMMUNITY CENTER, INC.

2283 Main Street
Stratford, CT 06615
(203) 378-2606
www.sterlinghousecc.org

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Dear Friends from Salem Lutheran Church,

Your donation made on December 19, 2022 of Various Food Items and Monetary Donation was welcomed at a pivotal time in our giving season! You are part of a family who call Sterling House *home*. We are so grateful for your gift, especially as we celebrate our 90th year of service to our community.

Your support empowers us to:

- Award \$50,000 in scholarships to attend our programs;
- Distribute over 380 Thanksgiving turkey dinners;
- Gift toys to 600+ children in December;
- Fill 170+ backpacks for our Food-4-Kids program weekly;
- Ensure 150 homebound seniors receive grocery delivery each month;
- Welcome 90 children daily in our Preschool and Afterschool;
- Coach 2,000+ youth in soccer, lacrosse, volleyball, and basketball;
- Transform the lives of 300 kids per week at our Summer Day Camp;
- Mobilize monthly CommunityCares Projects, Art, Karate, Scrapbooking, Safesitters, Yoga, and more!

Together we work to make our community stronger. From the bottom of our hearts, thank you. We hope to see you in the coming year and wish you a happy, healthy holiday season.

Sincerely,

Amanda Meeson
Executive Director

*Amazing community
effort + donation!
Thank you ♥*

Sterling House Community Center Inc is a 501 (c) (3) not-for-profit, charitable service organization and no goods or services were provided to you in exchange for this gift. Your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

WEEKLY AND MONTHLY EVENTS

Welcome to WONDROUS WEDNESDAYS! On Wednesday we have 2 wonderful opportunities to live into our mission of Encountering God, Building Relationships, and Changing Lives. The links are all on the calendar on our website at SalemBridgeport.org under the Resources Tab.

*** Every Wednesday at 12:00 noon we meet on zoom for prayer.** You can pray out loud if you want, or you can simply ask others to pray for you or for the concerns on your mind or heart. The more we talk with God and the more we listen to God, the more God is able to work through us. And the more we pray TOGETHER the more the power of prayer is multiplied.

*** And finally, every Wednesday at 6:30 pm we conclude with an Evening Bible Study 6:30-7:30 on zoom, led by Pastor Marjo and Jeanette Harris.** Join this diverse and interesting group of people for a study that is not simply informational but transformational. We continue our study of the book of Acts, concluding at 7:15 with a brief service of Holy Communion.

The next breakfast and faith discussion will be held on December 10th at Grace Lutheran Church, 150 Chapel Street, Stratford, at 8:00 (7:00 to help cook).

Please join Jeanette Harris and Genesis Gospel Café at the next Inner-View Chat'n'Chew, Saturday December 17th at 11:00 am. Details forthcoming.

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](#):**



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

STORIES OF FAITH IN ACTION

An ordinary blessing for Christmas

By Meta Herrick Carlson

Some of the sagest advice we receive in this life can sound like a simple thing we already know deep in our bodies, but it gains authority when we hear it confirmed aloud.

This was true for me 16 years ago, right before my first visit to a hospital patient as a spiritual care intern. My supervisor blessed me with these words: *Remember that you are not bringing God into the room. God is already there, and God will remain even after you go.* I knew that, of course, but hearing it gave me the strength to believe it in a new way.



There is a sermon I need to hear every single Christmas, and it goes like this: Peace, honey. Jesus is going to be born anyway.

The incarnation of God doesn't depend on my budget or my hustle or my traditions or even my Christmas Eve sermon. God is coming to live *with*, live *like* and live *for* us, whether I'm ready or not. When a loved one speaks that blessing over me, my shoulders relax and I'm able to notice God's delight in all the little things about this time of year.

A few years ago, the flurry of the Christmas season looked more like a blizzard to me, and a few things had to give. I decided not to send Christmas cards, and Christmas Eve dinner became pizza between worship services. Letting go and liberation!

The shift helped me stay rooted in the ordinary, even during an extraordinary season. These little rituals of not doing something or of doing something else reminded me that God is already here—and will be here even after we pack up the decorations in January.

Perhaps you adapted your traditions during COVID holidays or put them on pause altogether. What did you learn about God's presence and the patterns you hold dear? What can give or change this year? What ordinary seasonal ritual or stressor could use a blessing?

Practices

- **Write out a blessing together as a family.** Begin with a phrase such as "God already knows ..." or "God delights in"
- **Name what is good, what is hard and what is unbreakably true in your blessing.** Allow for humor, offer grace and notice what is never finished.
- **Engage the senses as you write your blessing.** Notice the smell of an evergreen tree, the taste of a pie, the sound of sleigh bells.
- **Make your blessing tangible.** Do this with the aid of an ornament, a candle or an ordinary errand.

Meta Herrick Carlson is an ELCA pastor, a poet and author of *Ordinary Blessings for the Christmas Season* (due out in October 2023).

ELCA WORLD HUNGER

The Horn of Africa

Kojo is a mother who lives in the Kakuma Refugee Camp in northwestern Kenya. The stresses of drought facing the Horn of Africa, compounded by the global food crisis, have had a big impact on Kojo and her three kids.

"We did not have fresh food, and at the time no one in the whole village practiced farming," Kojo said. "It was difficult to get food. The children survived on one meal a day, and there wasn't enough for everyone."

Things improved for Kojo when she attended trainings, supported in part by ELCA World Hunger, to learn about "net-house" farming. This method of farming, employing net-enclosed structures, is cost-effective and allows Kojo to cultivate crops year-round, regardless of harsh climate conditions such as drought.

With the skills and tools to practice this method of agriculture, Kojo now has a sustainable source of food. "My life has really changed," Kojo says.

I am able to provide food for my family, and I sell some of the produce to my neighbors. In turn I am able to buy things like soap and sugar. I feel better, my children are in good health, and I get some money from selling my farm products.

Equipping mothers such as Kojo to support their families goes even further than the fresh food on the table. Ensuring economic stability keeps kids in school, improves their health, relieves social pressure on those who have migrated to the area and prevents children from having to enter the labor market.

As the drought in Kenya and the rest of the Horn of Africa intensifies, the work ELCA World Hunger supports becomes all the more critical. Kojo is eager to expand her net-house farming for greater success as the effects of climate change deepen. "I hope we can plant more varieties of drought-resistant crops and establish another net house for even greater returns," Kojo shares. "This way we will be able to generate more income for our families and uplift our community."

The persistent drought is causing an uptick in migration in the Horn of Africa, and our partners such as LWF in Kakuma Refugee Camp are receiving more requests for services — especially education and agricultural training.

"I am really grateful for the support," Kojo said. "This will go a long way in ensuring sustainability in food production in our communities."

