



# *Salem Lutheran Church*

shalom - salaam - salem - peace

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

*2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in  
Advent*

*December 10, 2023  
9:30 AM*

PREPARE YE THE  
WAY OF THE LORD



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[www.salembridgeport.org](http://www.salembridgeport.org)  
[www.facebook.com/salembridgeport](https://www.facebook.com/salembridgeport)  
[YouTube](#) – Salem Lutheran Church, Bridgeport CT

# Welcome to Worship!

**We want you to feel safe** so please know that we have 3 units of the best air cleaner on the market in the sanctuary. (A big thank you to Bill Winter for getting our 3<sup>rd</sup> one repaired!). There is also one running in the lounge for when we have worship, coffee hour, or adult forums there. Also, you are most welcome to wear a mask at worship if you'd like.

**On this Second Sunday of Advent we hear John the Baptist calling us to repent, to clear the decks, to completely reorder our lives so that nothing gets in the way of the Lord's coming.** The reading from Isaiah gives the context for this radical call: the assurance of forgiveness that encourages us to repent; the promise that the coming one will be gentle with the little ones. Isaiah calls us all to be heralds with John, to lift up our voices fearlessly and say, "See, your God is coming!" **We say it to one another in worship, in order to say it with our lives in a world in need of justice and peace.**

**TODAY at 2:00, join New Paradigm Theatre for their Annual Holiday Show at Fairfield Theatre Company, 70 Sanford St, Fairfield.** For tickets click the link below or simply purchase them at the door.

<https://fairfieldtheatre.org/shows/stageone/new-paradigm-theatre-co-holiday-show-4>

To see a video from past shows, click on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CedbDJNtTcw&fbclid=IwAR345IwG0UWAaOs0Z80Skv99QuC1Bp-ornFsCkfK9rc8HpD3dFh0iUTfK2g>

**Pastor Marjo will be taking vacation time this week.** Should you need emergency pastoral care, please call or text the church phone at 203-336-3300.

**Jeanette "Momma J" Harris & Genesis Gospel Café invite you to an Inner-View Chat & Chew.** For information on the December meeting scheduled for 12/16 to contact Jeanette at 203-366-6778.

**Like our prayer breakfasts, a lunch is held each month to build relationships** among Lutheran and other congregations in our area at noon at Old Towne Restaurant in Trumbull. The upcoming date 12/16. If you would like to attend, please RSVP to Bruce Tomasko, [bltomasko@yahoo.com](mailto:bltomasko@yahoo.com).

**We are once again collecting hats, scarves, gloves, and mittens for our "Mitten Tree" from today through next Sunday.** There will be a box in the narthex on Sunday mornings for your contributions. Thank you for your support!

**St. Matthew Baptist Church invites you to their Christmas Concert Sunday December 17, 1:30-2:30 pm, at 126 Washington Avenue.**

# Gathering

## GATHERING MUSIC

## Comfort, Comfort, Now My People

*(as found in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's worship book,  
Evangelical Lutheran Worship # 256)*

- 1 "Comfort, comfort now my people; tell of peace!" so says our God.  
Comfort those who sit in darkness mourning under sorrow's load.  
To God's people now proclaim that God's pardon waits for them!  
Tell them that their war is over; God will reign in peace forever.
- 2 For the herald's voice is crying in the desert far and near,  
calling us to true repentance, since the reign of God is here.  
Oh, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way.  
Valleys, rise to greet the Savior; hills, bow down in humble favor.
- 3 Straight shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain.  
Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits God's holy reign.  
For the glory of the Lord now on earth is shed abroad,  
and all flesh shall see the token that God's word is never broken.

*Text: based on Isaiah 9:6-7,26:8-9,40:1-11, Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:2-3, Luke 2:29-32,3:4-6  
by Johann G. Olearius, 1635-1711; tr. Catherine Winkworth, 1827-1878, alt  
Meter 8 7 8 7 7 8 8*

*Music: FREU DICH SEHR, Trente quatre pseumes de David, Geneva, 1551*

*Text & Music are in the Public Domain*

*Performance #1 by Zack von Menchlofen, St John's Lutheran Church, Richlandtown, PA, 11/29/20  
as found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vrmpJIO3P7s> [2:10]*

*Performance #2 by Tim McNabb, Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Resurrection, Halifax, 11/22/22;  
Accompaniment Style: ELW Accompaniment Edition  
as found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xANbH8xW2A8> [2:47]*

- 1 "Comfort, comfort now my people; tell of peace!" so says our God.  
"Comfort those who sit in darkness mourning under sorrow's load.  
To my people now proclaim that my pardon waits for them!  
Tell them that their sins I cover and their warfare now is over."
- 2 For the herald's voice is crying in the desert far and near,  
calling us to true repentance, since the reign of God is here.  
Oh, that warning cry obey! Now prepare for God a way!  
Let the valleys rise in meeting, and the hills bow down in greeting!
- 3 Straight shall be what long was crooked, and the rougher places plain!  
Let your hearts be true and humble, as befits God's holy reign!  
For the glory of the Lord now on earth is shed abroad,  
and all flesh shall see the token that God's word is never broken.

*Performance #3 by Choir & Congregation of First-Plymouth Church, Lincoln, NE, 12/06/15  
as found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=119C58F3dnQ> [2:31]*

***Please note that here we go live on Facebook.***

## WELCOME

Welcome in the name of the God who holds boundless power over all creation,  
in the name of Jesus Christ, who laid aside that power to become one of us,  
and in the name of the Spirit who allows Jesus to live on in our hearts.

It is so good to be here! Thank you for joining us today! Thank you, those of you who are here in person with us! And thank you, those of you out there in cyber space, wherever – and whenever! – you are!

For those of you who don't know me,  
I'm Pastor Marjo Anderson of Salem Lutheran Church in Bridgeport, CT in the US.

To find out more about our ministry or to contact us,  
you can go to our website, SalemBridgeport.org, to our Facebook page, SalemBridgeport,  
and to our YouTube channel, Salem Lutheran Church, Bridgeport CT.

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

**This afternoon at 2:00 you are invited to New Paradigm Theatre's Annual Holiday Show  
at Fairfield Theatre Company, 70 Sanford St, Fairfield.**

**I'll be on vacation this week, beginning on Tuesday, so should you need emergency pastoral care,  
please call or text the church phone at 203-336-3300.**

**Every Monday-Friday at noon you're invited to join us on our conference line for prayer.**

**There is weekly opportunity for anti-racism work tomorrow at 4:00 on zoom,  
the Anti-Racism Accountability Group hosted by Jeanette Harris and me at.**

**On Wednesday, you are invited to our weekly Prayer Gathering at noon on zoom,  
and to our regular Bible Study at 7 on zoom.**

**All of our zoom events can be found on the Calendar under the Resources tab  
on our website: SalemBridgeport.org**

**Jeanette "Momma J" Harris & Genesis Gospel Café invite you to an Inner-View Chat & Chew. For  
information on the December meeting scheduled for 12/16 to contact Jeanette at 203-366-6778.**

**There's also a Lutherans and friends lunch on Saturday at noon.  
If you'd like to go, please RSVP to Bruce Tomasko.**

**Next Sunday at 1:30 there's a Xmas Concert at St. Matthew Baptist Church, 126 Washington Av**

**Any other announcements? prayer requests? God-sightings?  
Then let's begin our worship with prayer!**

Holy God, we come to praise you for who you are and to thank you for all you do.  
You have called us to love you above all others, to love our neighbors as ourselves,  
and instead we are complicit in oppression, injustice, and war.  
And yet, amazingly, you still love us, and continually call us back to you.  
Open us to the transformative work of your Holy Spirit  
that we might experience you so powerfully right here and right now  
that we are forever changed, unable to keep from proclaiming how great you are!  
We pray all these things in the Name of Jesus and by the Power of the Spirit. Amen

## OPENING HYMN

## Fling Wide the Door

*(as found in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's worship book,  
Evangelical Lutheran Worship # 259)*

- 1 Fling wide the door, unbar the gate; the King of glory comes in state;  
the Lord of lords and King of kings, the Savior of the world who brings  
his great salvation to the earth. So raise a shout of holy mirth  
and praise our God and Lord, Creator, Spirit, Word.**
- 2 He is the rock of our belief, the heart of mercy's gentle self.  
His kingly crown is holiness; his scepter is his loveliness;  
he brings our sorrows to an end. Now gladly praise our king and friend,  
and worship him with song for saving us from wrong.**
- 3 Oh, happy towns and blessed lands that live by their true king's commands.  
And blessed be the hearts he rules, the humble places where he dwells.  
He is the rightful Son of bliss who fills our lives and makes us his,  
creator of the world, our only strength for good.**
- 4 Come, Lord, our Savior, Jesus Christ; our hearts are open wide in trust.  
Oh, show us now your lovely grace, upon our sorrows shine your face,  
and let your Holy Spirit guide our journey in your grace so wide.  
We praise your holy name, from age to age the same!**

*Text: based on Psalm 24:7-10, Georg Weissel, 1590-1635; tr. Garcia Grindal, b. 1943  
Meter 8 8 8 8 8 8 6 6*

*Music: MACHT HOCH DIE TÜR, J. A. Freylinghausen, Geistreiches Gesangbuch, 1704  
arr. hymnal version*

*Tune is in the Public Domain.*

*Text © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress;*

*Arr. © 2006 Augsburg Fortress*

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*Performance by Trinity Lutheran Church, 73 Lancaster Street, Worcester, MA, 12/19/10  
as found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EgF3Taj5bfA> [2:10]*

**YEAR B – SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT – PEACE**  
**ADVENT WREATH CANDLELIGHTING**

*Leader 1:* Last Sunday we lit the first candle in our Advent Wreath, the Candle of Hope.  
We light it again as we remember that Christ will come again  
to fulfill all of God's promises to us and to bring to the world everlasting hope.

*(Light the 1<sup>st</sup> candle.)*

*Leader 2:* The second candle in our Advent Wreath is the Candle of Peace.  
It is sometimes called the Bethlehem Candle  
to remind us of the place in which preparations were made  
to receive and cradle the Christ child.



*Leader 1:* Peace is a gift that we must be prepared for.  
God gives us the gift of peace when we turn to him in faith.  
The prophet Isaiah foretells of Christ when he speaks of "the Prince of Peace."  
Through John the Baptist and all the other prophets,  
God asks us to prepare our hearts so that Christ may come in.  
Our hope and our peace are in God, and in his son Jesus Christ.

*Leader 2:* We light this candle today to remind us that Christ brings peace to all who trust in him.

*Leader 1:* Let us pray. *(a brief silence)*  
Loving God, we thank you for the peace you give us through Jesus.  
Help us prepare our hearts to receive Him. Bless our worship.  
Guide us in all that we say and do.  
We ask it in the name of the one born in Bethlehem. **Amen**

*(Leader 2 lights the 2<sup>nd</sup> candle.)*



**ADVENT SONG**

**“Light One Candle”**

**Natalie Sleeth**

**All:** **Light one candle for hope, one bright candle for hope,**  
**He brings hope to ev’ry heart, He comes, He Comes!**  
**Light one candle for peace, one bright candle for peace,**  
**He brings peace to ev’ry heart, He comes, He Comes!**  
**Light one candle for joy, one bright candle for joy,**  
**Ev’ry nation will find salvation in Beth’lem’s baby boy.**  
**Light one candle for love, one bright candle for love,**  
**He brings love to ev’ry heart, He comes, He Comes!**  
**He brings love to ev’ry heart, He comes, He Comes!**

*Text & Music by Natalie Sleeth, 1930-1992; © 1976 by Hinshaw Music Inc.*

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*Performance by the Ferguson family, Ella & Eva, vocals; Amanda, violin; Homer, piano; 12/06/20  
as found at this link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w\\_thZGERq2g](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w_thZGERq2g) [1:45]*



# Word

*Please be seated.*

## **A READING FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT: Isaiah 40:1-11**

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.

**Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term,  
that her penalty is paid,  
that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.**

A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,  
**make straight in the desert a highway for our God.**

Every valley shall be lifted up,  
**and every mountain and hill be made low;**  
the uneven ground shall become level,  
**and the rough places a plain.**

Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,  
**and all people shall see it together for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."**

A voice says, "Cry out!"

**And I said, "What shall I cry?"**

All people are grass,  
**their constancy is like the flower of the field.**

The grass withers, the flower fades, when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;  
surely the people are grass.

**The grass withers, the flower fades; but the word of our God will stand forever.**

Get you up to a high mountain,

**O Zion, herald of good tidings;**

lift up your voice with strength, O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,  
**lift it up, do not fear; say to the cities of Judah, "Here is your God!"**

See, the Lord GOD comes with might,

**and his arm rules for him;**

his reward is with him,

**and his recompense before him.**

He will feed his flock like a shepherd;

**he will gather the lambs in his arms,**

and carry them in his bosom,

**and gently lead the mother sheep.**

Word of God! Word of Life! **Thanks be to God!**

**A READING FROM THE BOOK OF PSALMS: Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13**

You have been gracious to your land, O LORD;  
**you have restored the good fortune of Jacob.**

You have forgiven the iniquity of your people  
**and blotted out all their sins.**

I will listen to what the LORD God is saying;

**for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you.**

Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you,

**that your glory may dwell in our land.**

Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;

**righteousness and peace have kissed each other.**

Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth,

**and righteousness shall look down from heaven.**

The LORD will indeed grant prosperity,

**and our land will yield its increase.**

Righteousness shall go before the LORD

**and shall prepare for God a pathway.**

Word of God! Word of Life! **Thanks be to God!**

**A READING FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT: 2 Peter 3:8-15a**

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise, as some think of slowness, but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but all to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and everything that is done on it will be disclosed.

Since all these things are to be dissolved in this way, what sort of persons ought you to be in leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set ablaze and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire? But, in accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth, where righteousness is at home.

Therefore, beloved, while you are waiting for these things, strive to be found by him at peace, without spot or blemish; and regard the patience of our Lord as salvation.

Word of God! Word of Life! **Thanks be to God!**



**A READING FROM THE GOSPELS: Mark 1:1-8**

*You may stand if you so desire.*

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

“See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,  
who will prepare your way;  
the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:  
‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,’ ”

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, “The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Word of God! Word of Life!

**Thanks be to God!**

*You may stand if you so desire.*

## **AFFIRMATION OF FAITH FOR ADVENT**

*(based on John 1 and John 14:19-26)*

Let us affirm our faith together.

**In the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.  
All things came into being through him,  
and without him not one thing was created.  
The life that was in him became light for all people.  
The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.**

**To all who receive him, who believe in him,  
is given the power to become children of God.**

**The Word became flesh, a man named Jesus.  
He lived among us, full of grace and truth.  
From his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace.**

**In the name of Jesus, God has sent the Holy Spirit to teach us  
and to remind us of all that he said and did.  
We believe that because he lives, we shall live also,  
to the glory of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Amen**

## **PURPOSE STATEMENT** *(updated by Council in June of 2019)*

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

**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,  
that we may encounter God, build relationships, and change lives.**

May it be so!

**Amen**

## **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**

## PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

*Please be seated.*

With hope and expectation,  
we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all who await God's day of restoration.

*So they can be heard online, these petitions will be offered by the leaders at the microphones.*

Send forth your faithful people with words of promise and forgiveness.

Teach your church to be bold in revealing your good news in word and in deed.

We pray for our mission partners,

especially today for Reconciling Works, for Seafarers and International House,  
and for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.

We pray for all teachers and educators, especially those at Fairchild Wheeler High School,  
that they have the necessary resources and support needed to effectively educate our children.

And we pray for Salem members & their families, especially those celebrating birthdays this week:  
Susan Murphy.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Reveal your majesty in mountain peaks, flowing rivers, and blossoming wilderness roads.

Work through us to heal the earth where it longs for renewal.

and to bring wholeness to the earth and all its creatures.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Turn the hearts of the nations toward righteousness and peace.

Help us to heed your call to work for justice and peace and to lobby for increased cooperation  
between countries, commonwealths, political parties, and government leaders.

In times of prosperity, move the hearts of leaders to be the most generous  
to the least, the last, and the lost for the sake of us all.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Comfort your people with tender words of love and healing.

Surround all who are grieving, all who know depression or anxiety, or all who feel lonely or forgotten.

Stay close to those who await healing or relief, especially Austin, Barbro, Barry, Bob, Boni, Bud,  
Cindy, Cliffy, Clyde, Dave, David, Dennis, Diane, Dolores, Dorothy, Francesca, Hans, Ivy, Janice,  
Jeff, Jessica, Jim, Joe, Joey, John, Karen, Kevin, Lynn, Marija, Pastor Marjo, Mary Lou, Melvin Jr,  
Melvin Sr, Natalie, Pastor Paul, Pastor Paula, Sara, Sasha, VL & all we name in our hearts & on our  
lips.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Grant holy patience to all who are waiting this season. Give hope to those seeking employment. Bring  
reassurance to people awaiting new diagnoses or treatments. Protect expectant parents. Watch with  
those who keep bedside vigil.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

With you a thousand years is like a day.

Bless the memory of the saints from ages past and the anticipation of saints yet to be born.

Inspire us to live with faith as we await your new heaven and new earth.

Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

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

O God of hosts, listen to these & all our prayers & restore us with your great everlasting mercy. **Amen**

# Thanksgiving

## OFFERING PRAYER

Jesus, you said, “Give and 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 and offerings of time, talent and 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 INVITATION

*Please be seated.*

In response to God’s grace, it is our joy to return to God our tithes and offerings.  
We are grateful for your generosity, which not only is an exercise of and witness to your faith,  
but which funds our ministry together here at Salem.

If you are a member of another congregation,  
we encourage you to give to your home congregation first,  
but invite you to contribute to our ministry also  
so that we can continue to take our worship online  
as a witness to the power and love of the amazing God we serve.  
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 HYMN

## Prepare the Royal Highway

*(as found in the ELCA worship books Evangelical Lutheran Worship # 264)*

- 1 Prepare the royal highway; the King of kings is near!  
Let ev'ry hill and valley a level road appear!  
Then greet the King of glory, foretold in sacred story:**

*Refrain:* **Hosanna to the Lord, for he fulfills God's word!**

- 2 God's people, see him coming: your own eternal king!  
Palm branches strew before him! Spread garments! Shout and sing!  
God's promise will not fail you! No more shall doubt assail you! *(Refrain)***
- 3 Then fling the gates wide open to greet your promised king!  
Your king, yet ev'ry nation its tribute too may bring.  
All lands will bow before him; their voices join your singing: *(Refrain)***
- 4 His is no earthly kingdom; it comes from heav'n above.  
His rule is peace and freedom and justice, truth, and love.  
So let your praise be sounding for kindness so abounding: *(Refrain)***

*Text: based on Psalm 24:7-10, Isaiah 40:3-5, Matthew 3:3, 21:8-9, Mark 1:2-3, 11:8-10,  
Luke 3:4-6, 19:35-38, John 12:12-13, by Frans Mikael Franzén, 1772-1847;  
translation Lutheran Book of Worship; Meter 7 6 7 6 7 7 6 6*

*Music: BEREDEN VÄG FÖR HERRAN, Swedish folk tune, 17th cent.*

*Text © 1978 Lutheran Book of Worship, admin. Augsburg Fortress*

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*Music is in the Public Domain*

*Performance by Tim McNabb, Halifax Lutheran Church, 11/08/21*

*as found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BoPmZYUv0BQ> [2:58]*

# Sending

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

*Please be seated.*

**This afternoon at 2:00 you are invited to New Paradigm Theatre's Annual Holiday Show at Fairfield Theatre Company, 70 Sanford St, Fairfield.**

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Should you need emergency pastoral care, please call or text the church phone at 203-336-3300.

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**There's also a Lutherans and friends lunch on Saturday at noon.**

If you'd like to go, please RSVP to Bruce Tomasko.

**Next Sunday at 1:30 there's a Christmas Concert at St. Matthew Baptist Church at 126 Washington Avenue**

## THANK YOU

Before we end the live-streamed portion of our worship,

I want to especially thank those of you out there in cyberspace who have worshipped with us. I hope you will join us again.

If you'd like to know more, or if you'd like to talk or pray with me, you can reach her through Salem's website or Facebook page.

## BLESSING

As we say good-bye to our online worshippers,

I'd like to offer to all who are worshipping with us, both in-person and in cyberspace this blessing based on our reading today from 2 Peter, chapter 3.

Know that the Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise ... but is patient with you, not wanting any to perish, but wanting all to come to repentance.

Therefore, while you are waiting, strive to be found by him without spot or blemish. Amen

*Here ends our Facebook live stream.*

# Meal & Dismissal

## CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

*You may stand if you so desire and make the sign of the cross, the sign marked at baptism.*

Blessed be the holy Trinity, ✚ one God,  
who Spirit calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps us in the one true faith. **Amen**

God's love is infinite and unconditional.

As individuals we have only to accept it and live in its light. The moment we confess, we are forgiven.  
As together we gather for worship, so together we confess our sins as our community,  
and together we are forgiven, restored, and made new.

*Silence is kept for reflection.*

Holy God, **we confess:**

**that too often we focus on the things we lack,  
that too often we are attached to our own personal agendas,  
that too often we insist on doing things our own way,  
that too often we are oblivious to the needs for justice around us.**

God who has heard our confession both forgives and forgets every failing. **Amen!**

Loving God, **teach us:**

**to see your amazing abundance rather than any lack,  
to listen more - to you and to each other - and to talk less,  
to trust in your power and not our own,  
to build relationships with those who are not like us.**

God who has given us the will to do these things ✚ graciously gives us the power to perform them.  
**Amen!**

## COMMUNION

*Please be seated.*

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 & praise!**

In the night in which he was betrayed....

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 and the blood of Christ shed for you.

*During communion, you may take your communion elements during worship  
or hold on to your kit until you get home.*

*If you take the elements inside the church, open the kit over the pew to prevent spilling on the carpet.*

*After the service, please dispose of your own kit either in a waste receptacle at church or at home.*

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



## SENDING SONG

## All Earth Is Hopeful

*(as found in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America's worship books,  
This Far by Faith # 47 & Evangelical Lutheran Worship # 266)*

- 1 All earth is hopeful, the Savior comes at last!  
Furrows lie open for God's creative task:  
this, the labor of people who struggle to see  
how God's truth and justice set ev'rybody free.**
- 2 People of Israel, you heard the prophet tell:  
"A virgin mother will bear Emmanuel";  
she conceived him, "God with us," our brother, whose birth  
restores hope and courage to children of this earth.**
- 3 Mountains and valleys will have to be prepared;  
new highways opened, new protocols declared.  
Almost here! God is nearing, in beauty and grace!  
All clear ev'ry gateway, in haste, come out in haste!**
- 4 We first saw Jesus a baby in a crib.  
This same Lord Jesus today has come to live  
in our world; he his present, in neighbors we see  
our Jesus is with us, and ever sets us free.**

*Text: based on Isaiah 7:10-14, 40:1-11, Matthew 1:18-25, 3:1-12, Luke 2:33, 38, James 5:7-10  
by Alberto Taulé, b. 1932; tr. Madeleine Forell Marshall, b. 1946; Meter 11 11 12 12*

*Music: TODA LA TIERRA by Alberto Taulé, b. 1932; arr. Skinner Chávez-Melo, 1944-1992;  
Spanish Text & Tune © 1993 and Translation © 1995 Centro de Pastoral Litúrgica,  
admin. OCP Publications, 5536 NE Hassalo, Portland, OR 97213.*

*Text & Tune © 1972 Alberto Taulé, admin. Virgil C. Funk;  
Translation © 1995 Madeleine Forell Marshall, admin. AusburgFortress;  
Arrangement © Estate of Skinner Chávez-Melo; Tune: TAULÉ  
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*Performance by Pastor Sarah and Pastor Micah, Mary Miller, Organ.  
Salem Lutheran Church, Catonsville-MD & Faith Lutheran Church, Cockeysville worship,  
12/07/20*

*as found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NLEbRXTiOJQ> [2:10]*

## DISMISSAL

Go in peace. Prepare the way of the Lord! Make his paths straight!

**Thanks be to God!**

## PEACE

As Christ reconciles us with God,  
let us be reconciled with each other by sharing the peace of the Lord!  
The peace of the Lord be with you always!

**And also with you!**

Please share that peace!!

## POSTLUDE

**Prepare Ye (the Way of the Lord)**

**from “Godspell”**

**Prepare ye the way of the Lord!**

*Words based on Isaiah 40:3, Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4 by Stephen Schwartz*

*Music by Stephen Schwarz*

*© 1971 by Range Road Music, Inc., Quartet Music and New Cadenza Music Corporation.*

*Copyright renewed.*

***Performance by Fairfield County Children's Choir, Jon Noyes, Music Director & Founder  
with soloists Patrick Agonito, Caroline Lui, Abigail Bruce & the Combined Choirs of the FCCC  
at “Spotlight Broadway” at Klein Memorial Auditorium, Bridgeport, CT, 02/01/14***

*as found at this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YfxDUNMfry4> [1:58]*

## CREDITS

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# Announcements



**Call in to our prayer line at 681-999-0232, using access code 673980#, at noon Mon-Fri** for a brief time of prayer. You can pray silently and anonymously, ask for particular prayers, or offer your own prayers.

**You are invited to join the Anti-Racism Accountability Group hosted by Pastor Marjo and Jeanette Harris on Mondays 4:00-5:00 on zoom.** The group began in the fall of 2020 as a response of our Southern CT Lutheran pastors to the murder of George Floyd, but has grown into a diverse group that includes people who are White and Black, Christian, Jewish, Unitarian, and Rastafarian, clergy and lay, and from CT, MA, and DE. Some come every week while others drop in as their schedule permits. The link is on Salem's calendar, so please drop in and see what God is doing to help us fulfill our baptismal call to work for justice!

**On Wednesdays, you are invited to our weekly Prayer Gathering at noon on zoom.** The zoom link is on Salem's calendar under the Resources tab at SalemBridgeport.org . **Please join us!**

**Wednesday our regular evening Bible Study continues at 7:00 on zoom as we continue to make our way through the book of Romans, picking up with chapter 8, verse 5.** The zoom link is on Salem's calendar under the Resources tab at SalemBridgeport.org . **Please join us!**

**You have another opportunity for Bible Study as well on zoom on Tuesday evenings 7:30-8:30.** This group, led by Pastor Rip Hoffman, looks at the gospel for the coming Sunday. For the link, contact Pastor Marjo or Pastor Hoffman.

**You are invited to join members of the New England Synod on the first Monday and third Thursday of the month 7:15-7:45ish on zoom as we undergird the anti-racism work of our synod with prayer.** The next date is 12/21. The link is on Salem's calendar.

**This year the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent and Christmas Eve are on the same date! Due to people's schedules, council decided that Salem will celebrate Advent 4 at our 9:30 AM service on the 24<sup>th</sup>, but we will have NO Christmas Eve service at Salem.** We encourage you to find the place and time that works best for you to celebrate this holy night!

**Save the date!** A Special Congregational Meeting was held on 10/29 at which the congregation voted to close. Last Sunday Pastor Maria was here in her role as Congregational Consultant for Holy Closure and Merger for the New England Synod to explain the process of dissolution which will begin in January. There are practical and legal procedures which must be followed, and as the synod leads us through these, we ask your patience and your prayers. **The next congregational meeting will be in person on January 14<sup>th</sup> following worship.**

**Thank you for donating to our collection for "Seafarers Christmas at Sea".** A packing party was held yesterday and we thank everyone who participated!

**Thank you for your contributions to Salem's Food Assistance Fund!** While we may not have our own food pantry anymore, some of our members and others are still in need of food and Pastor Marjo distributes \$25 stop & shop cards as needed, requested and as available. We encourage you to donate to Salem's food assistance fund. You can give using the envelopes found in your quarterly envelope packet or you can put a check in the donation box at Salem marked "food assistance." In addition, you may send a check to the office or drop it in church mailbox or give it or cash to Pastor Marjo.

**If you'd like to do more than feed people,** you can also contribute to the Pastor's Discretionary Fund which is used to help members who have other financial needs. If you have financial needs, please contact Pastor Marjo or Parish Nurse Carol Lansing.

**We are grateful to God for answering our prayers that there would once again be a food pantry in this building.** Here's how it happened! While the Ephraim French Seventh Day Adventist Church that purchased the building from us wanted very much to start a food pantry, they were unable to get permission from CT Food Share who said there were too many pantries in the area. They and we kept praying. Meanwhile a food pantry to which members of our congregation used to deliver food closed, and they began delivering to the Bishop Jean Williams Food Pantry which operated out of a church on Worth St. Three years ago that church building was sold and purchased by Transforming Lives Church. While they knew that as their congregation grew they would eventually need all of the building, they agreed to allow the food pantry to stay for three years. As the end of that time period approached, the Bishop Jean Williams Food Pantry needed a new space. That's when we discovered how God had been using Salem to be an answer to our own prayers and those of the Ephraim French Seventh Day Adventist Church and the Bishop Jean Williams Food Pantry! The pantry is now renting space from the SDA church right here at 3160 Park Avenue! Because of how God has worked, over 500 families came by to pick up food the week of Thanksgiving, and food was delivered to an additional 200 families! Thanks be to God!

**Do you want to talk or pray with your pastor? Well, just like you call your doctor or dentist to schedule an annual wellness visit or a visit to deal with a particular issue, you can contact Pastor Marjo via text or phone at 203-982-3441, or through Office Manager Karl Kraft via text at 203-336-3300 or email at [salemsec123@sbcglobal.net](mailto:salemsec123@sbcglobal.net) .** Our bodies are intimately connected with our minds and hearts and spirits, so the health of one part impacts the health of the other parts.

- 1. Get your annual “spiritual” – just the way you get your annual physical.**  
Call or text Pastor Marjo at 203-982-3441 to arrange a time to discuss how you are, and let her know how she can pray for you.  
Or if you prefer to use email to set something up, send your email to [salemsec123@sbcglobal.net](mailto:salemsec123@sbcglobal.net).
- 2. Call in to our prayer line at 681-999-0232, using access code 673980#, at noon Mon-Fri** for prayer. You can pray silently & anonymously, ask for particular prayers, or offer your own.  
**OR join our weekly prayer gathering on Zoom, Wednesdays at noon, at this link:**  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82882777326?pwd=VCtObFRPOGI3cTR3eII2ZmtiZEpadz09>
- 3. Begin a fast** or establish a new healthier habit.
- 4. Commit yourself to some new work of charity and one new work of justice.**  
*If you’re wondering what the difference is, it’s like this.*  
*If people are hungry and you give them fish, that’s CHARITY.*  
*If people are hungry and you teach them to fish, that’s EMPOWERMENT.*  
*If people are hungry and you work to change laws so that they receive high enough wages from their jobs so they can afford to buy fish, that’s JUSTICE.*  
If you’re not sure how to “do justice” as God commands through the Prophet Micah (6:8), Pastor Marjo can offer suggestions.

## UPCOMING COMMEMORATIONS

### **Lucy, martyr, died 304**

**Wednesday, December 13, 2023**

Lucy was a young Christian of Sicily who was martyred during the persecutions under Emperor Diocletian. Her celebration became particularly important in Sweden and Norway, perhaps because the feast of Lucia (whose name means "light") originally fell on the shortest day of the year, which is VERY short in countries far north!

### **John of the Cross, renewer of the church, died 1591**

**Thursday, December 14, 2023**

John was a member of the Carmelite monastic order, and worked to reform it. His writings reflect a deep interest in mystical thought and meditation.

### **Las Posadas**

**Saturday, December 16, 2023**

This celebration, long popular in Mexico, takes its name from the "posadas," or lodgings, sought by Mary and Joseph in Bethlehem. Their search is reenacted in a neighborhood, unsuccessfully, until finally they are welcomed in, and a party commences.