



January 2024

the
SPIRIT

Salem Lutheran Church

shalom - salaam - salem - peace

A Reconciling in Christ (RIC) Congregation

A Spiritual Wellness Survey

Happy New Year! We have left 2023 behind and crossed over into 2024, so it's time to look back on where we've been in the past, take note of where we are right now, & set goals to get us to where we want to be in the future. As we do that, we want to look at our whole selves – our physical, psychological, emotional & spiritual selves. Those are 4 aspects of our humanity that we can look at separately, but of course they are all interconnected & interrelated & any disease or imbalance in one can affect any or all of the others. But my job as your pastor is to help you take care of your spiritual selves. So consider this article to be a wellness survey of your spiritual health! To do that, I'd like us to look first at what scripture has to say to us.

1. God gave us the Law to help us be healthy as individuals and as a community. When someone asked Jesus, "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart & with all your soul & with all your mind.' This is the 1st & greatest commandment. And the 2nd is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' On these 2 commandments hang all the Law & the Prophets." [Matthew 22:36-40]

So how are you loving God with your mind? How much time are you spending in God's Word?

How are you growing in your knowledge of God?

How are you loving God with your heart? How much time are you spending in prayer, talking & listening to God?

How often are you praising God for who God is & thanking God for what God does?

How are you loving God with your spirit? How much time are you spending worshipping?

How often do you see God at work, or hear God's voice, or feel God's presence?

And how are you doing at loving your neighbor as yourself?

How are you making your family & friends & church family feel loved & valued & respected & appreciated?

2. Whenever we forgot the Law, God sent us the Prophets to call us back. There were the former prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, & Kings), the latter prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, & Ezekiel), & the 12 minor prophets (Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, & Malachi). Some suggest that the best summary of the prophets' call is found in Micah 6:8 "...to do justice, love kindness, & walk humbly with your God". As we learned at one of the Council of Churches' programs, if people are hungry & you give them fish, that's kindness; if people are hungry & you teach them to fish, that's taking a step beyond kindness towards justice; & if people are hungry & you work to change laws so that they receive high enough wages from their jobs so they can afford to buy fish, that's doing justice. In the Lutheran church we talk about social service/kindness & social justice.

So how are you doing in your work for social justice? How are you doing in your work for social service?

And how humble are you in your attitude towards God?

How are you living into Jesus' words, "not my will, but yours be done, God"?

3. And Jesus takes us beyond the Law & the Prophets, by giving us a new commandment, "As I have loved you, so you must love one another" [John 13:34] Just think how Jesus responded to those friends & those enemies who betrayed & abandoned & crucified him: he loved them enough to suffer & die for them & he asks us to do the same: "Love your enemies & pray for those who persecute you".

Are you loving your enemies? Are you praying God's blessings on those that persecute you?

4. But it's about more than just us. God blessed Abraham so that he would be a blessing and all peoples on earth would be blessed through him [Genesis 12:2-3] God made Israel a light for the Gentiles, that God's salvation might reach to the end of the earth [Isaiah 49:6]. Jesus tells us to let our light so shine before others, that they may see our good works & give glory to God [Matthew 5:16] Paul tells us that the gifts of the spirit are love & joy, peace & patience, faithfulness, kindness & goodness & generosity, & self-control.

What do people see when they look at you? What do they hear?

Do they see light or darkness? Do they hear love or hate? Do they feel appreciated or disrespected?

Do they see you filled with joy or anger? peace or frustration? patience or impatience? faith or doubt? kindness or meanness?

5. And Jesus gave us the great commission – to pass on the faith to everyone who does not have it, especially to the next generation.

Have you passed on your faith? Have you told people about God's boundless power and God's endless love?

Have you witnessed to the amazing God we serve?

I believe that the greatest gift Lutherans have to offer is our understanding that we are justified not by works, but by grace through faith. We are indeed justified by faith. But justification is only the first step in the process; sanctification is the rest of the journey. Justification is the gift we are given; sanctification is what happens when we open the gift & allow God to use it for our good. Sanctification is what happens when we love God with all our heart & soul & mind & strength & when we love our neighbors as ourselves & when we love our enemies the way Jesus loved his. Sanctification is what happens when we do justice & love kindness & walk humbly with God. Sanctification is what happens when we let our light shine & allow the fruits of the spirit to be cultivated in us. Sanctification is what happens when we witness to what God has done for us & in us & through us. May God do this & MORE in 2024!

Abundant blessings be yours!

Pastor Marjo

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
salemsec123@sbcglobal.net

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

Barbara
Bernedette
Dolores
Jonathan
Linda
Steve

and all we name in
our hearts.



LEADERSHIP AT SALEM

COUNCIL

Marjo Anderson, Pastor
Cindy Roberts, President
Sandra Brown, Vice-President
Nancy Headford, Secretary
Rich Kenyon, Treasurer
Ray Anderson
Cake Elie
Steve Kuczo
Carol Lansing
Rich Lansing
Tom Larson
Bill Winter

Save the dates! A Special Congregational Meeting was held on 10/29 at which the congregation voted to close and so we have signed a covenant with the synod that commits us to a specified 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.

Following worship on January 14, we will have a congregational meeting which will be conducted by Pastor Maria Hammons. Lunch will be served part-way through the meeting. This is part of the specified process of dissolution to which we committed when we signed a covenant with the synod as part of the vote to close on 10/29/23. There are practical and legal procedures laid out by the state, our synod, and our constitution which must be followed, and as the synod leads us through these, we ask your patience and your prayers.

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 2024 Salem Lutheran

SUN	MON Jan 1	TUE 2	WED 3	THU 4	FRI 5	SAT 6
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 4pm Anti-Racism Accountability Group 7:15pm Synod Anti-Racism Prayer Gathering 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 12pm Wednesday Weekly Prayer 7pm Bible Study on Romans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 5pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center 	
7 Baptism of Our Lord 9:30am WORSHIP on ZOOM 10:30am Adult Forum	8 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 4pm Anti-Racism Accountability Group 6:30pm Social Ministry Committee Meeting 	9 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 6pm Stewardship Committee Meeting 	10 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 12pm Wednesday Weekly Prayer 7pm Bible Study on Romans 	11 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 	12 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 5pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center 	13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9am The BREAKFAST Gathering!
14 Epiphany 2 9:30am Worship 10:30am Special Congregational Meeting	15 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 4pm Anti-Racism Accountability Group 6:30pm Finance Committee Meeting 7:30pm Executive Committee Meeting 	16 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 	17 Golden Hill Community Supper <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 12pm Wednesday Weekly Prayer 7pm Bible Study on Romans 	18 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 7:15pm Synod Anti-Racism Prayer Gathering 	19 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 5pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center 6pm Pray CT Summit planning meeting 	20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11am Inner-View Chat n Chew
21 Epiphany 3 9:30am Worship	22 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 4pm Anti-Racism Accountability Group 7pm Council Meeting 	23 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 	24 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 12pm Wednesday Weekly Prayer 7pm Bible Study on Romans 	25 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 	26 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 5pm Rostered Leaders - God at the Center 	27
28 Epiphany 4 9:30am Worship	29 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 4pm Anti-Racism Accountability Group 	30 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9:30am Rostered Leaders' Tuesday Talk and 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 	31 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12pm Noon Prayer Call In 12pm Wednesday Weekly Prayer 7pm Bible Study on Romans 	<div style="border: 2px solid purple; padding: 10px;"> <p>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 remain silent and anonymous, ask for particular prayers, or offer your own prayers.</p> </div>		



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



2023 Seafarers Christmas at Sea Collection

With the help of the members of Grace Lutheran Church in Stratford, we packed 43 Seafarer bags. Each bag contained a woolen cap, a sweatshirt, a t-shirt, three pairs of socks, nuts, candy, and a Christmas card.

We received a \$250 Thrivent grant and generous donations from Salem members to help us make up Salem's 20 bags. Grace Lutheran Church was able to contribute enough to make 23 more bags.

On December 9, fourteen adults and two children from Grace and Salem met at Grace Lutheran Church to pack the bags for the Seafarers out of New Haven's port. After the packing, Carol and Rich delivered the 43 bags to Pastor Ruth Setaro of the New Haven port.

Many thanks to all who donated to the Mitten Tree. The items collected have been delivered to The Center for Family Justice.

A very special thank you to Kristen Ladue and the students at Newtown Middle School. Kristen has been teaching some students to crochet and they donated 14 scarves and 10 hats that were handmade. An additional 92 hats, scarves and gloves were put on their Christmas tree and donated to our collection. That is a very generous donation and is much appreciated by the Center.

B-E F-A-S-T!

Seconds count for people having a stroke. The faster they are treated, the less damage is done from the interrupted blood flow to the brain.

To recognize a stroke, remember the acronym: B-E F-A-S-T

Balance is unsteady

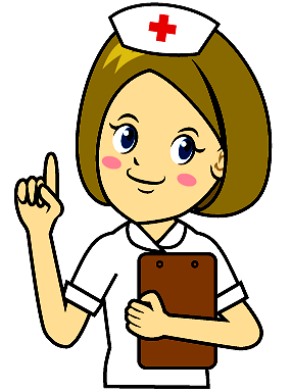
Eyesight changes

Facial drooping

Arm weakness

Speech difficulties

Time to call 911



Bridgeport Hospital has a new imaging system that allows neurosurgeons to view all types of strokes, brain aneurysms, and other conditions. This equipment is available seven days a week, 24 hours a day. The patient can receive medications and/or brain surgery to unblock blood vessels in the brain or stop a brain bleed.

The faster a person with stroke symptoms gets to the hospital, the better outcome for the patient. BE FAST.





Still time to give!



There is still time to make the dream of homeownership in the Town of Fairfield possible for four families!

We need to raise \$800,000 to build these homes in the Tunxis Hill neighborhood located at 240-246 Greenfield Street. **The Elizabeth and Joseph Massoud Family Foundation** and an anonymous **Fairfield family** are offering a **dollar-for-dollar match for donations up to \$400,000!** If Habitat CFC can raise \$400,000 through our Annual Appeal, the money will be matched, and we will have the funds needed to complete the Fairfield homes! Please donate **TODAY** to support our goal to help four low-income, working families achieve their dream of homeownership in the Town of Fairfield!

Give Online! Scan the QR code or visit habitatcfc.org/donate.

If you've recently given, please know we appreciate your gift.



It only takes a moment to say

Thank You...



Dear Salem,

I have always referred to you as the "Big Sister" church whenever I speak of you and what you all have meant to me and the ministry of Genesis Gospel Cafe. Of course I am grateful for the fellowship and the friendships that we've shared and hopefully will continue to share.

My heart remains in awe at the loving generosity and encouragement by your financial gift as I slowly make my way through studying at United Lutheran Seminary in Gettysburg, PA through the TEEM course. I am grateful for the love of God flowing through you all by your prayerful and financial support.

Although this note is late in coming consider it like "fine wine" - better and more potent because of its age!! 😊

You all remain in my prayers and in my heart and I trust I will remain in your hearts and prayers as well. Blessing to you all!!

But your kindness

will be remembered

always.

Jeanette Harris
AKA
Momma J.

AKA

Someone Special



message from our ceo

Dear Friend,

Sending heartfelt wishes for a season overflowing with joy, warmth, and abundant moments of kindness. May the holidays bring you closer to cherished loved ones, fostering a spirit of generosity and giving. Your unwavering support has not only built homes but also nurtured hope, for which we are profoundly grateful. Wishing you and your loved ones a joyous holiday season filled with love and gratitude. Happy holidays from the entire team at Habitat for Humanity of Coastal Fairfield County!

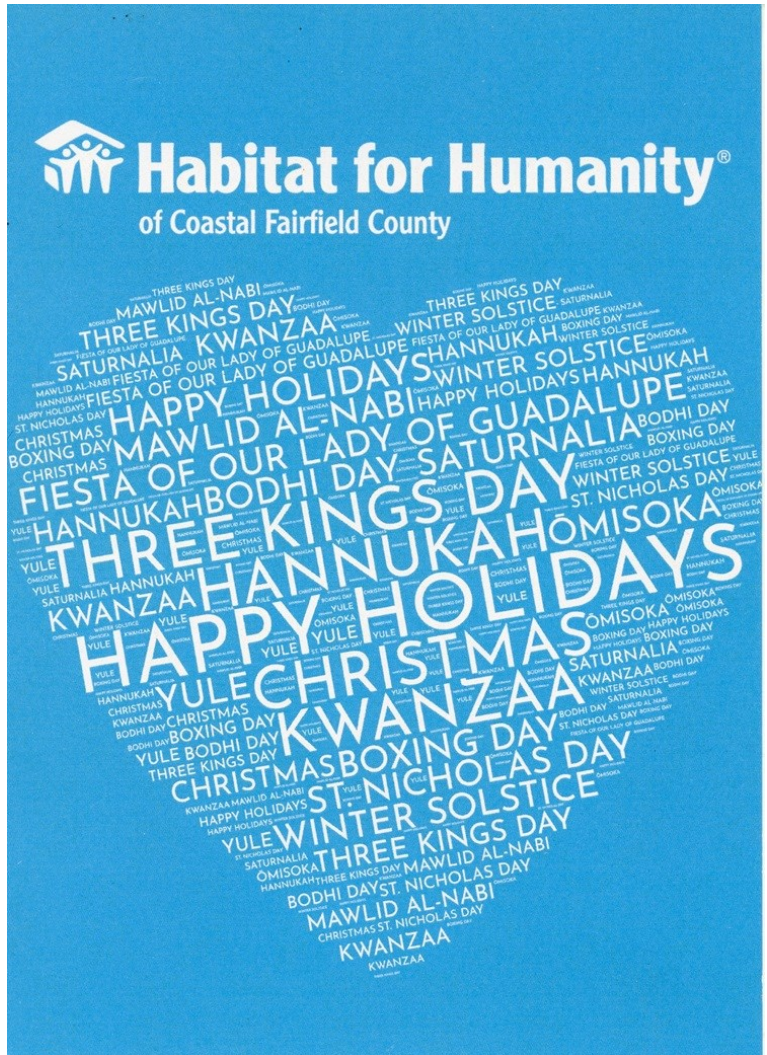
Best wishes,

Carolyn Vermont

Carolyn Vermont

Chief Executive Officer

HabitatCFC.org



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.

* **Our Wednesday Evening Bible Study continues at 7:00 on zoom as we study Paul's letter to the Romans. Why Romans, you ask? Well, according to Martin Luther...** "This Epistle is really the chief part of the New Testament and the very purest Gospel, and is so worthy that not only should every Christian know it word for word, by heart, but feast on it every day as bread for the soul. It can never be read or pondered too much, and the more it is dealt with the more precious it becomes, and the better it tastes." While you may not be ready to memorize it or read it every day, we do invite you to study it weekly with us! This week we'll be looking at chapters 2 & 3. The zoom link is on Salem's calendar under the Resources tab at SalemBridgeport.org .

The next breakfast and faith discussion will be held on January 13th at Grace Lutheran Church, 150 Chapel Street, Stratford, at 9:00 (8:00 to help cook).

Please join Jeanette Harris and Genesis Gospel Café at the next Inner-View Chat'n'Chew, Saturday January 20th 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

My take: In those days

Modern-day Bethlehem. This Christmas will be anchored in our time, our places.

By Mary W. Anderson

In those days when I was a kid in the 1960s, Christmas was magical and merry. In these days it can seem raw and real.

Once, with little empathy or anxiety, we could hear the Scriptures tell of the Romans occupying Palestine, of Mary and Joseph being homeless in Bethlehem. We could read the refugee story of the holy family fleeing to Egypt, and most of us who were white Americans with no personal experience to match such things simply passed by those raw realities on the other side of the road.

In those days, and in my region of the United States, Christmas was all glitter and bows. Christmas was also, it seemed from both an advertising and a congregational point of view, nearly free of political affairs. This remained true, even though Matthew and Luke tried hard to tell us that in those days of the first Christmas, the story was dripping with the raw realities of the time. Those days mattered.

The world of retail will pull out all its merry and magical stops to inspire our purchases, but in these days of Advent and Christmas our spiritual hearts will know better. We'll hear the story of Luke 2 differently as it opens with the familiar words, "In those days." Hearing those opening words again, we'll crave a peace that passes all understanding. This year we're apt to connect to political and social traumas, as the Gospel writers so urgently intended.

If we're paying close attention, with open minds and hearts, when we hear of Rome oppressing Palestine, we'll think of modern-day wars. With this Scripture story of poor people, refugees, the slaughter of children, homelessness, prejudice and a political power that seeks to crush the enemy, our bingo cards are full. When we connect "those days" with "these days," then we are open to hearing the Christmas story in all its gore and glory.

In these days, when we, as Americans, experience divisions among us and disgust between us, when depression, anxiety and loneliness abound, when bombs are falling from the skies of Europe and the Middle East and when climate change is afflicting our planet, we need the gift of the Christ child. In these days of our culture that come marked with the sticky tags of "post-COVID," "post-Christian" and "postmodern," we urgently ask the question afresh: "Where is God in the midst of all this?" Our Advent carols in their minor keys are moaning with the hope we all long for "in these days."

Then, on Christmas morning, the old Gregorian chant is sung: *Hodie Christus natus est* ("Today Christ is born"). "Today" is the key time-marker. The Christmas gospel isn't a once-upon-a-time story. In fact,

we proclaim that Christ is born this very day and time, born among us, in our modern mangers and stables. Advent teaches us that Christ came among us and will come again. Christmas proclaims that Christ is born today, in the present, with us at this very moment. Even if the moment isn't perfect, even if the world is a wreck, even if we're living our worst life, Christ is here "in these very days."

During one of these days, while tutoring a first-grader in reading—a child whose family, I had discovered in conversation, was homeless—I gently inquired what they did at Christmastime. His head bowed. Speaking into his chest he said, "Santa Claus doesn't come to South Carolina." "He doesn't?" I asked. "No," he said, "he can't be everywhere, so he doesn't come here." Realizing that this was what his parents had told him as a cover for their poverty, I didn't confirm or deny his Christmas story. This was his raw reality.

In these days we Christians are experiencing the transition or end of many traditions, institutions and congregations, and even of this long-cherished print magazine.

With the past a memory, with the future hard to see, the present pops with purpose. Christmas joy and peace are found in our today. They aren't found in sweet nostalgia (in those days) nor in wishful thinking (a vague someday)—but in this holy *hodie*, Christ is here. The Christmas story in Luke 2 begins "In those days," then anchors the incarnation in a particular time in history and a particular place on the globe. There is great particularity to the Christmas story as it is framed around Emperor Augustus and Quirinius, Joseph and Mary of Nazareth, and unnamed shepherds in Bethlehem.

Just so, this Christmas will be anchored in our time, in our places. It will be framed by our political, cultural and social settings. We will read and hear the stories from Luke and Matthew, not for old times' sake but to reimagine Christmas now. How does the incarnation, the coming of God to live among us, shape how we see our circumstances right now? How does the story claim us and call us anew? Because Christ is with us every day, forever born among us, and because we must ask these deep, baptismal questions each morning of our lives, Christmas Day advents renew with each pink sunrise. *Venite adoremus!* Come, let us adore him!

Mary Williams Anderson is a Columbia, S.C., native and has been a Lutheran pastor for 35 years. She serves as coordinator for contextual education at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, Columbia.



ELCA GLOBAL LINKS

Stay informed. Be inspired. Get involved.

PEACE AND JUSTICE

“I realized I was not alone”

Ana lived with her husband and four children in a safe, secure village in Sinjar, a town in northern Iraq. But then an ISIS attack changed everything. Ana lost several family members in the attack, including her father, mother, brother and sister.

Trying to figure out what might be next for their family, Ana and her husband survived tough conditions, without food or water, before moving into a temporary camp. Eventually they returned to Sinjar, but it had been destroyed.

The ISIS attack traumatized Ana. Overwhelmed and unsure where to turn, she decided to seek medical treatment. When her friends and neighbors heard about her situation, they recommended that she visit a women’s center in Sinjar for support.

The women’s center is part of a larger project, supported by ELCA World Hunger, that empowers women and youth from marginalized communities to claim their fundamental rights in Iraq. The project builds on relationships that ELCA World Hunger has established through prior work with local communities supported by ELCA World Hunger in Sinjar and Sumel, and works with local neighbors to build sustainable livelihoods.

“I visited the center and explained my situation to the staff, who were very helpful and kind,” Ana said. The staff recommended that she participate in individual and group sessions aimed at supporting people such as Ana as they struggle to cope with traumatic experiences in their everyday lives.



“I realized I was not alone and that many other women were facing similar struggles.”

—ANA

“During my participation in those sessions, I realized

I was not alone and that many other women were facing similar struggles,” said Ana. “We were able to openly discuss our problems with each other and learn from each other. These sessions really increased our awareness and helped us manage and overcome our problems and stress, allowing us to feel positive and alive again.”

With the center’s support, Ana and other women facing similar challenges are better equipped to cope with the stress of rebuilding their lives after such significant loss. Such support is critical in equipping neighbors to overcome the poverty and hunger that often result from violence and vulnerability. With the support of ELCA World Hunger, Ana can envision and begin to claim a hopeful future for herself and her family.