

Our Savior's Voice

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

359 Leonard Street N - West Salem, WI 54669

www.oursaviorswestsalem.org

608-786-0030

April 2020



Vision Statement:

***We are a church centered in Christ,
inviting all into a community of worship,
nurturing all to be disciples of Jesus.
Together we reach out to make a difference
here and throughout the world.***

Covid-19 Response

Office and Building Closed

Please note that until further notice the building and offices are closed. Staff may periodically be present, but will not allow access to the building. If you have a need to connect, please call ahead or send an e-mail.

Although we will not be in the office every day, we will be checking our emails regularly and also checking the answering machine. Leave us a message and we will get back to you.

Worship, Education, and Other Programs Suspended

Worship, Confirmation, Sunday School, and other ministries will not meet until further notice. But...*check out the pages on Worship and Education Ministries to see what is happening...and (spoiler alert) it's a lot!*

Updates

To find the latest information – *because things are always changing* – check out the **Covid-19 button** on the front page of the church website (www.oursaviorswestsalem.org).

Pastor's Page

I've had some strange Easters in the past. Like 1983, in Seminary, when I needed to be far away from the seminary during Holy Week, driving 12 hours by myself on Holy Saturday to return. I slept-in Easter morning.

Or 1991. I was in Negaunee, outside of Marquette, Michigan. The Northern Michigan University hockey team played on Holy Saturday for the NCAA championship. They won – in triple overtime ... and I had to preach at the sunrise service. I made it. Not sure how it sounded, but I made it!

And then there was 1997. My Dad had died nine days earlier. For some reason, the morning after his death I woke up with a Rod Stewart tune in my head – "...if we fall in love tonight, you're gonna be all right. Your heart is in good hands." That became the basis for my Easter sermon that year. Incredibly deep and personal. And surprisingly, very healing.

But, what about 2020? I'm guessing with two weeks to go, that things aren't going to be back to normal by April 12. Which makes this the Easter that ... isn't? Or the Easter that is ... not yet?

So, what are we going to do? We are "safer at home" (and that's a good thing – stay there!), and the church building is locked. On Easter morning, instead of 600+ celebrating the resurrection with voices, brass, and energy, there will be empty pews. No flowers, no white paraments, no a***** (you know, the word we are not supposed to use during Lent) echoing throughout the sanctuary.

All cold and quiet. Even the heat won't be on!

So, what are we going to do?

One of my colleagues wondered if we could/should reschedule Easter. I suppose when the time comes that we can worship together again, it will be a time of great joy. One of my

discoveries over the past two weeks is how I miss people around me (like you!). I miss the faces and voices, and I will be excited when the time comes for us to be together again. And so, when that time comes it will be like Easter, a resurrection of sorts.

But it won't be Easter. I can't change the calendar. Easter is April 12th, and that's not changing. Nor should it.

In 2002, as part of our adoption process, we traveled twice to Novosibirsk, deep inside Russia. On one of our trips, our hostess, Natasha, took us to see her newly rebuilt Orthodox church. I asked her how the faith was kept alive during the Soviet era. She said it was hard as they worshiped in her grandmother's apartment. And as hard as it was, they probably celebrated Easter too.

It's easy to celebrate the joy of Easter when it's bright and sunny, with birds chirping and flowers blooming. When the church is packed, the choir on the top of its game, with brass and organ. When the "A" word is shouted out, and life is good.

Maybe too easy.

Look, I wish we could gather for Easter. Truth be told, I write this two weeks ahead, and at the moment I have no idea what we will do for Easter worship with our video ministry. Total blank at the moment. A return to a "normal" Easter would solve that problem, and a lot more too!

But remember – Easter itself is hardly normal. And perhaps that is part of the problem. Our celebration of Easter has become too normal. And yet, Easter is not normal – it is a mind-blowing, life-altering, future-defining gift of a good and gracious God. That God in Jesus (*spoiler alert – this is part of the Palm Sunday message*) would willingly take on all that is ugly, sinful, and destructive in our existence, and replace it with life, real life, is, well, not at all normal. And yet, that is the Easter message.

That is what gives this Easter the potential to be something very special. Perhaps this is the Easter we finally get it.

- That God really is at work in our world, even when our world is dark, dank, and struggling to find life.
- That God really is at work, bringing about life not just on beautiful, picture-perfect Easter mornings, but especially on the Easters – and any other days – that seem to have little energy and hope.
- That God really is at work in people, the people we know and love, but also people we have never met.
- That God really is at work in me. That in these days of uncertainty and despair, in my little corner of the world, God can – and does – use me to bring the life of the risen Jesus to those around me.

Maybe then, in the end, this too will be an Easter to remember. An Easter to treasure, as we discover that the gift of Easter is not found in the trappings, or even in the full house of worshipers.

Because in the end, Easter is Jesus, risen and walking among us even now. And no virus can stop that!

Pastor Jon



Worship

Until further notice all public worship services at Our Savior's are cancelled.

So, what are you going to do?



Weekend Worship Video

A worship video is posted on the web site by 6 PM Saturday. The video includes Holden Evening Prayer (want a copy to sing along, contact the office!). It also includes the reading of Scripture, a message by one of the pastors, and a week-specific prayer. Check it out at www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/videos. You can watch it at your leisure!

Children's Message

Each week, by Saturday evening, check out the children's message video, also on the video page. A fresh message each week, based on the gospel reading. Just for kids!

Wednesday Devotions

Each Wednesday at 7 PM Pastor Jon is hosting devotions via "Zoom." To access the devotions, go to <https://zoom.us/j/520801254>. You can also call in using your phone – for that option, contact Pastor Jon. Either way, join us for about 30 minutes of devotions, reflections, and conversation.

But what about...

Holy Week and Easter?

Maundy Thursday

“Zoom” in with us and experience Maundy Thursday very differently. We’ll hear the story and strip the altar – all together, and all in live time. We will not have communion, but we will “wash up together.” Join us to find out how! **At 7 PM** go to: <https://zoom.us/j/664776970>. This service will be recorded so you can also watch it later – find it on the website at www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/videos.

Good Friday

Worship will again feature the Service of Tenebrae – find it at www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/videos. Watch it, join in the praying, and at the end, reflect on what God is doing for us, even in the midst of a pandemic!

Easter

Time to celebrate the victory of Jesus Christ over sin and death! Even though we can’t be together, and our world is still gripped with fear and uncertainty, we know that God is at work. Easter worship will be posted Easter morning on the video page (www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/videos). Watch it, but don’t just watch – continue to live as Easter people, steeped in the power of the resurrected Jesus!



Holy Week & Easter

Education Ministries

Until further notice all Sunday School, Confirmation, and Adult studies are not meeting (sort of!)

So, what is happening?



Sunday School Video

Each week Pastor Jean is preparing a video message based on the Sunday School lesson for that week. You can find it at www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/videos. If you need the written material contact the office – we’ll get it to you!

Every week the Sunday school families receive an email from Pastor Jean with a **children’s bulletin** (that relates to the lessons that week and is always available on the usher’s table when you come to worship) and also the **back page of their Sunday school leaflet**. This page has activities for families to work on during the week. The leaflet should normally come home with the kids each week, but you may not have noticed the activities for families on it. Now that you have time, it would be great to pick an activity or two and work on them together. Pastor Jean is inviting families to take pictures of themselves doing an activity and then email it to her (pastorjean@oursaviorswestsalem.org) to put on the website so we can all stay connected and see what fun things everyone is doing. If you aren’t getting the weekly emails, check your “spam file” and if it still isn’t there, please email Pastor Jean to let her know and she will get you on the list.

Confirmation Classes

Pastor Jon has connected with confirmation classes via zoom, and if the closure of classes continues, we will create a zoom classroom. For now, keep watching videos to keep up with your worship notes. We will keep you posted.

For the moment, Confirmation is still on the calendar for April 26, but that may need to change. Just remember that God is still with us, and we will work it out!

Adult Bible Study

We're doing it ...” Zoom” style! Join us for one or both opportunities to ponder God's word in light of these days ...

Wednesday at 9:30 AM (<https://zoom.us/j/187713252>)

Sunday at 10:30 AM (<https://zoom.us/j/570417034>)

Scholarships

High School seniors ... don't forget to apply for a first-year college scholarship. Our Savior's has several scholarships available, ranging from \$250 to \$750, for your first year in college. For more information, and to download the application, go to the "Youth and Family" page of our web site. The deadline is April 30 - get them in to the office soon!

And then there's more! Current college freshman are eligible to apply for a scholarship for their sophomore year. More information on the "Youth and Family" page - deadline is April 30.

Contact Pastor Jon if you have any questions.

Pastoral Care

These are difficult days for Pastoral Care. Hospitals and nursing facilities are locked down. So, what can we do?

We are here!

The pastors continue to be “on the job,” and can be accessed by e-mail or phoning the office. We are limited in our ability to visit, but can do some “tele-care,” and connect in other ways. Please let us know what you need, and share your prayer concerns!

Prayer Time

We have a crew ... praying! One person (or maybe more) prays each day at 11:45 AM. Praying is now happening at home, but it's happening! One person who recently prayed told us, “*I prayed for everything I could think of. Thank you for the opportunity.*” Want a shot at it? Pray – anytime, anywhere! And if you'd like to be the one designated pray-er, contact one of the pastors.

Prayer Chain

And then we have our email prayer chain, receiving and then lifting up prayer requests. Another cool ministry – maybe for you? Contact Pastor Jean.

Calling Teams

Newly created, the “calling teams” are reaching out every week to the families of Our Savior's. “*How are you doing?*” “*Our Savior's is still here ...*” “*What can we pray for?*” Thank you to our callers for being a part of this new ministry!

Prayer Labyrinth

Looking for a different way to engage in prayer during these challenging days? Try the “prayer labyrinth” in back of the lot across from the parking lot. Head towards the black fence and watch for the grass entrance between rows of bricks.

What’s a labyrinth? Not a maze, designed to confuse, but a path that takes you from the world into a quiet space of prayer. Enter the labyrinth walking the grass path between the bricks. As you walk, note the signs and ponder the messages you read. The path will lead you to the center, where you can sit on the bench and spend some time in quiet prayer. And then, when you are ready, return via the path to resume life as a faithful, and embraced, disciple of Jesus!

From the staff at Our Savior’s...



During these difficult days know that you are in our thoughts and prayers. We miss you, and yearn for the day when we can see you again. Until then, please keep safe. Do what you need to do to protect yourself and your family. Know too that we are praying for you. And if you have needs and prayer concerns, please contact us!

Pastor Jon and Pastor Jean

Food Ministries

People are still hungry ... and with jobs at risk that need will grow ... so, what are we doing about it?

Care and Share Food Pantry

The Care and Share Food Pantry remains open, Saturdays, 10 AM to Noon. As the pandemic continues, your support is critical! As the building is still locked, please call the office ahead to ensure that your contributions can be dropped off.



Feed Our Children

A HUGE thank you to Angie Hemker and her team for working to develop ways to augment food availability to kids and families in the community. Keep watching the “Feed Our Children – West Salem” Facebook page for updates.

World Hunger Appeal

In the midst of all the other concerns these days don't forget that there are hungry people elsewhere in the world. Your gifts to the World Hunger Appeal make a difference across the country ... and across the globe.

Other Important Ministries

Mom's Group

Check out the Mom's Group Facebook page at [OSLC West Salem Mom's Group](#) to find creative ideas for keeping our children active and busy during these days of staying home. There is also a blog so we can check in with each other, share prayer requests, and provide support.

Forward Fearless and Faithful

The Forward: Fearless and Faithful ministry is postponing the forest walk set for April 19. Watch for a new date once we are able to be out and about. Until then, continue to look "forward" and be "fearless and faithful!"

Synod and ELCA

Our support of ministries in our area and around the world continues through the La Crosse Area Synod and the ELCA. Offices may be closed, and this year's synod assembly has been postponed, but throughout the church ministries are still hard at work. The church is not shut down!

Financial Support Ministry

During these days of uncertainty and disruption, the work of Jesus Christ through Our Savior's continues. Now, more than ever, your financial support makes a difference as in new ways we proclaim hope to a very frightened world.

Since we aren't "passing the plate," there are other ways you can share your gifts. You are always welcome to mail in your envelope, but consider one or more of the electronic giving options which we have available. You can find more information, and directions on starting your electronic giving, on our web site at www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/giving. Among the options are:

Giving via electronic transfer...

- Your contribution is made directly from your financial institution, and is protected by secure software.
- Bank transfers have the lowest fees for Our Savior's, allowing for the greatest amount of your gift to go toward the ministries of Jesus Christ!

Giving via mobile app...

- Easily create an account to set up recurring donations and review your giving history.

Giving via text...

- The first time you use texting, you will be asked to register your payment information; after that, enter the amount and send the text.

Give in confidence!

At Our Savior's we value integrity in our financial practices. Transactions are made via a secure web portal, and are facilitated by Vanco, an industry leader in online financial products.

***Thank you for your support.
We are grateful for your partnership as
we proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ!***

Web Site: www.oursaviorswestsalem.org

OUR SAVIOR'S STAFF

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