

Our Savior's Voice

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

359 Leonard Street N - West Salem, WI 54669

www.oursaviorswestsalem.org

608-786-0030

May 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.***

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Pastor's Reflections and Ramblings

So, what have you been up to lately? I've been doing a lot of reflecting.



I think about what I should have been doing these last weeks ...

- We should have gathered with our 5th graders and others to prepare for first communion – making family cups and baking communion bread and learning, all in readiness to take communion on Maundy Thursday.
- We should have just celebrated Easter with about 700 of our closest friends in worship, unburying alleluias, singing hymns with brass accompaniment, in a packed church adorned with flowers on the altar, and watching the acolytes struggle to reach the top of the new Christ candle to get it lit (*by the way, we are using the new candle – did you notice that??*).
- We should have celebrated the culmination of four years of study with 32 ninth graders as they affirmed their baptism on confirmation Sunday.

... and what I was expecting to be doing in the weeks to come ...

- We would be winding down the Sunday school year, partaking in a breakfast specially prepared for us by the middle school breakfast club, and then going in to the treasure box one more time celebrating another year of Sunday school together. We would have also thanked our teachers for their faithful dedication and presence with us as they shared their witness and God's love each week.
- We would be finishing up another year of confirmation lessons, electives, and time in our small groups.

- We would be looking forward to graduate recognition Sunday, learning about where our seniors will be heading in the fall as they begin the next chapter of their life, and gifting their moms with a special treasure.
- We would be winding down activities like choir and Mom's Group and Men's Group and Bible study at Salem Terrace, getting ready for our summer hiatus.
- We would be getting energized for Vacation Bible School and Sugar Creek Bible Camp.

How quickly life can change ...

When Jesus said "Behold, I make *all things* new" little did we know what that might mean.

- We are worshipping on line after taking a do-it-yourself crash course in modern technologies.
- We are getting used to talking to a camera rather than people.
- We are having Bible study, devotions, classes, and meetings via Zoom (just picture "The Brady Bunch" opening screen).
- We are trying to find a new sense of routine in the midst of chaos.
- We are missing people and smiles and hugs and handshakes.
- We are missing milestones and trying to figure out how we're going to celebrate them at a later time and/or in a new way.
- We have a dedicated group of folks making phone calls trying to make sure everyone knows they are important and still feels connected. *(If you get a call from a number you don't know, maybe from an "outside" area code, it may not be a pesty telemarketer or an annoying political call, it may be one of your fellow members calling to check in on you! You might not want to ignore that one!)*

- We have a faithful group of folks who are praying every day at 11:45 a.m. as Pastor Jon rings the church bells. Another group prays using those prayer requests that we know about – their lists have been long and ongoing – lots to pray for these days.

I know you are all experiencing disruptions to your lives just as we are. Dealing with children at home, homeschooling, grieving the loss of senior year and all that comes with that milestone, not being able to travel, having to wear masks when you're out in public, getting shaggy because you can't get your hair cut, not being able to just run to the store and grab an item, not being able to do the little things that we have taken for granted forever. Going for walks and bike rides has been a positive result of having to stay near home. There are so many projects that need to get done, and I figured we would have all this time on our hands having to stay home and the projects would get done ... but no ... think again ... the absence of routine (or this new routine) has not been conducive to getting anything done ... my time is taken by other things, out of the ordinary things, things I hadn't planned on, new things that have to be done ... and so it goes...

We cling to the words of Romans 8 as we navigate life these days ... “for I am convinced that neither death, nor life ... nor anything else in all creation, [not even COVID-19,] will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” May you know God surrounds you with his love and care and does not abandon us in these challenging, wearying, lonely, anxious, overwhelming times.

I leave you with my favorite prayer:

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but

only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.
(ELW Evening Prayer)



We thank God for each and every one of you
... we miss you!

Keeping you in my thoughts and prayers until
we can be together,

Pastor Jean

A Note from the Pastors ...



Pastor Jon and Pastor Jean continue to meet with colleagues and Bishop Arends, and to receive updates from other sources including the Wisconsin Council of Churches. Even as this newsletter is being printed they will be meeting again with the Bishop and colleagues to discuss how reopening of the congregation can occur in a safe fashion. The pastors are grateful to their colleagues for insights and to you for your understanding, patience, and support. We continue to place as a highest priority faithfulness to the gospel and care for God's people. That means you!

Please continue to keep the staff of Our Savior's in your prayers during challenging times. But also remember that we are not church by ourselves, but we are church with the La Crosse Area Synod and the ELCA.

Pastors Jon and Jean

Worship

Until further notice all public worship services at Our Savior's are cancelled. Watch the web site for updates of our worship opportunities and schedules.

Current worship opportunities:

Weekend Worship Video

A link to our worship YouTube is posted on the web site by 6 PM Saturday. The video includes music recorded by the choir (safely distanced, of course!), along with Scripture, a message by one of the pastors, and a time for prayer. Videos remain on YouTube, so you can watch it on your schedule. Video links are available at:



www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/videos

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!

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 prepares a video message based on the Sunday School lesson for that week. She also sends out some written material to add to the lesson. If you need the written material, contact Pastor Jean or the office. And the video? You can find it at www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/videos.



Confirmation Classes

Pastor Jon has met with 7th and 8th graders, and they are close to done for the year. 9th graders are awaiting the rescheduling of the Affirmation of Baptism. Pastor Jon will meet with parents in the near future via Zoom to consider the options (once we know what the possibilities will be!).

6th graders continue to meet with Corey Sjoquist, and will finish out the year via Zoom.

As we do not know what restrictions or recommendations will be in place for the fall, we are not certain how confirmation will run. But...we are thinking about it! In some fashion, with health a priority, we will continue to share faith and build disciples of Jesus!

Pastoral Care

Although visits in person are not possible, Pastor Jon and Pastor Jean remain available for pastoral care. Please contact them via phone or e-mail if you have needs or prayer concerns.

Prayer Time

Our 11:45 AM pray-ers continue to lift up the needs of the world – and of our little corner of the world – in prayer. Each day, at 11:45 AM one person (or maybe more) is praying – from their homes – while the bell at church is rung. You too can be a pray-er – contact us and we'll work you in to the schedule. Or...just go ahead and pray on your own!

Prayer Chain

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



Calling Teams

Calling teams continue to reach out each week to families at Our Savior's, just to keep us together and make sure we are remembered. Thank you to our callers for being a part of this new ministry!

Food Ministries

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

Feed Our Children

Before anything else, THANK YOU to Angie Hemker for making Feed Our Children a major player in the work to make certain that children and families are fed. With significant support from the community, Feed Our Children has distributed over 300 bags of groceries since mid-March. *Your gifts toward this ministry are important – this is a major undertaking, making a major difference in the lives of people in our community.*



In addition, plans are now being made for the summer lunch ministry. We are not yet certain how it will work, but...it will happen! And lives will be changed.

Contact the office to see how you can be a part of this important ministry.

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 to ensure that we will be able to receive your gifts. And thank you!



Congregation Council

The Congregation Council met three times in late March and early April (via Zoom) to consider issues regarding the ministry of the congregation during a time of partial shutdown and “Safer at Home.”

The Council has taken steps to ensure that we not only survive, but that our ministries thrive during this time of uncertainty in our world. The Council understands that far from slowing down and “circling the wagons,” this is a moment when we as a church have a vital message to share – that we remain in God’s embrace, and that our hope is in the crucified – and risen Jesus!

During the three meetings of the past month the Council has:

- Received reports and updates on the ministries we are carrying out.
- Authorized the securing of a Payroll Protection Program grant, and heard that the grant has been received.
- Affirmed the desire to maintain employment of staff.
- Affirmed the pastors’ work in carrying on worship, pastoral care, education, and other ministries.
- Begun to consider how the congregation comes out of this time, and the opportunities that will be there for continued ministry, especially in:
 - Worship – how will we worship in the future, and are there new possibilities with online worship?
 - Food – noting that food ministries are one of the things we are known for in West Salem.
 - Community – many have expressed their longing to return to the church community. How can we build on that in the future?

The Council will meet again on Monday, May 18, via Zoom.

Thank you to the members of the Congregation Council, and especially Steve Ahles, Council President, for your leadership!

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.

And we do just that! Our videos receive over 200 views each week, the children's videos are popular, and we even make DVDs for Mulder's and Mill Street Manor. Feed Our Children is a major ministry in our community, and the Care and Share Food Pantry feeds those who are struggling. We connect by phone with hundreds each week, and lift up prayer concerns. We are studying the Bible and teaching confirmation. All of this is happening, even with the building locked!

Your support makes this happen. You can mail in your envelope (lots of you are doing that – *thank you!*).

Or, you can use electronic giving (in April electronic giving was up 50% - lots of you are doing that too, so *thank you!*). For more information go to oursaviorswestsaalem.org/giving.

- **Electronic transfer...**Your contribution is made directly from your financial institution.
- **Mobile app...**Easily create an account to set up recurring donations and review your giving history.
- **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!*** 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!*

Some Things We Are Looking Forward To!



We haven't forgotten...
when life sort of returns to normal!

- **Affirmation of Baptism (Confirmation)**
 - *Not sure when or how...but we will get our 9th grade class confirmed!*
- **Graduate Recognition**
 - *Too much hard work – and now moving out into a challenging world – to let that one go!*
- **First Communion Instruction**
 - *Pastor Jon's favorite class to teach – and it's way too important to lose it!*
- **Sunday School and Confirmation Classes**
 - *Not sure how it might work next year, but we'll figure it out. We love kids way too much!*
- **Monthly Connections with Seniors**
 - *From worship at Mulder's, Lakeview, Salem Terrace, and Bangor, to the monthly study at Salem Terrace, we love seniors too!*
- **Synod Assembly**
 - *Later this year? And we elect a new bishop!*
- **Each and Every One of You!**
 - *We miss you all, and look forward to seeing you again in worship and in conversation. Stay safe...*

Need an “Out?”

Consider Some Country Hiking

The Michelson family has 160 acres of farmland, woods and creek bottoms that you're welcome to explore if interested. There are no groomed hiking trails but you're free to roam and explore. Your dogs would be welcome too. No social contact, free to come any time. The farm is on highway M one mile north of the fairgrounds.

If you have an interest, and would like more information, email Jim Michelson at jamichels@centurytel.net with a subject line: "Send Me a Map". Stay Safe!



And while you are hiking...

Questions to ponder (while hiking the farm...or anywhere else):

1. What does God teach us with the change of seasons?
2. Has there ever been a season in your life God helped you through?
3. As you hike is there something that connects you to God?
4. Where do you hear or see God during your hike?
5. Much as the way the season changes from winter to spring our world has changed due to COVID-19. What things are you hearing from God to help you move through these times?

One more thing...if you take pictures of where you see God in nature...or if you have some thoughts from your hike on the farm (or anywhere else) ...send them to Pastor Jon, and he'll share them on the website. In the midst of the craziness of these days, your insights might help others see life in a new way, and you can be a part of God's work in their lives (how cool is that!)

Thanks to our Forward: Fearless and Faithful team for sharing this exercise with us!

Web Site: www.oursaviorswestsalem.org
OUR SAVIOR'S STAFF

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Eric Sorenson, Senior Choir Director
Karen DeSchepper, Financial Secretary
Josh Corning, Custodian



From the family of
Doris Michelson...

The family of Doris Michelson wishes to thank all who have expressed their sympathy through cards, letters, phone calls or other communication following Doris's death on April 2. A funeral and burial were held on April 8 for family only. A celebration of life ceremony will be planned for a later date. Our special thanks to Pastors Jon & Jean and to Linda Berg.

Sincerely,
Jim, Elizabeth, Bob, Mary, Steve

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