

Our Savior's Voice

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

359 Leonard Street N - West Salem, WI 54669

www.oursaviorswestsalem.org

608-786-0030

January 2021



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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January 2021

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Pastor's Reflections

It's 2020 ...

The answer to everything that happened last year
... *it's 2020.*

It was Christmas Eve, the YouTube worship service had been recorded days earlier and was already posted on line, the 3 PM Zoom service had gone well with only one minor glitch that was fixed, and now it was time for the long awaited 7 PM Zoom service. This service had been months in the planning, tens of hours in making the preparations, and so much time looking forward to. We bundled up to brave the 5-degree temperature of the night ... long winter underwear, layers of clothes and socks, boots, two pairs of gloves, and a hat ... and we headed out to the Holthaus farm. The excitement growing as we drove down the road. We were welcomed at the barn - softly bathed in the glow of a single light bulb, fresh hay on the ground. It was perfect! We unloaded the car – chairs, blanket, TV trays, computer and phone, communion wear, and the baby in the manger. All was prepared. We waited patiently ... our breath visible in the cold air, the soft mooing of the cows filling the quiet night. And, now the time had come ... the congregation was gathering – smiling faces and names began to appear on the screen. We were together at last. We heard Eric sing “O Holy Night”, Pastor Jon welcomed all, I read from Isaiah, we heard Lynette begin to sing “O Come All Ye Faithful”, and then ... then the screen went black ... the computer that had been full of life (and battery power) was dead, lifeless, and showing no signs of resurrection. This beautiful worship service, on Christmas Eve, in the barn with the Baby Jesus, was done. No more Christmas hymns to sing along with, no Gospel reading and message, no Holy Communion ... all of the work, all of the planning, all of the anticipation and joy of sharing ... gone ... dreams dashed and spirits deflated ... there was only darkness. Mother Nature vs. technology and Mother Nature came away as the spoiler. *It's 2020!*



But the baby was born, the Word became flesh and dwells among us. Yes, dwells. Jesus was still born, in that barn long ago, quietly amongst the animals, with no fanfare, and unlike our technology that died in that holy moment, Jesus still lives on and dwells among us.

It's 2020 and Jesus *still* dwells among us. There may have been a lot of things in 2020 – too numerous to recall, and felt by each and every one of us – that went wrong, that didn't go as planned, that made us feel inadequate and unprepared, that changed our lives forever, that caused havoc in our world, but ... the baby, Jesus, still came that night in the manger, and is still ever-present with us these days of darkness and uncertainty, bringing us light and life.



It's true we blame 2020 for a lot of the darkness, but in the light of Jesus, 2020 was not all bad.

There was much learning that occurred (no one was spared – young and old alike learned something) ... we learned how to be flexible, how to pivot on a moment's notice ... we learned new ways to do familiar thing ... we learned how to be creative ... we learned new skills, like how to use technology and many different forms of technology ... we learned how to connect with people without being in the same room ... we re-learned how to write real letters, how to send note cards and greeting cards, and how to talk on the telephone ... we learned to connect with people using technology that was only an innovative “dream of the future” in a display at the Museum of Science & Industry (in Chicago) way back in the '60's where you could actually see someone in their home (the visual being a woman in her nightgown with cream on her face and curlers in her hair!) ... we learned the value of being together with family, the value of friends, the value of kids being in school to get the most of their education, the value of touch, the value of seeing the expression on someone's face, the value of interpersonal encounters and relationships ... we learned to appreciate God's creation of nature and the beauty that surrounds

us ... we learned to appreciate time ... maybe, dare I say, we even learned to appreciate church, our faith, and the community of the faithful that gathers here in this place called Our Savior's Lutheran Church ... *It's 2020!*

As these last months have dragged on, we are reminded that God is in charge. God created people - scientists and those in healthcare - who have worked diligently, selflessly, to care for us during these dark days of pandemic, and who have discovered a vaccine that will hopefully help us see the taming and ultimately the end of this deadly disease. But, in the meantime, we are reminded to dig deeply and find that patience we have learned this year. *It's 2020!*



We are also reminded to be “good” Lutherans ... good Lutherans who have heard the words and taken to heart the example of Martin Luther from long ago when he lived through the 1527 Black Plague. Martin Luther's advice, as he lived it centuries ago, is that we follow the science, we

care for our neighbor, we protect ourselves, but most of all we protect our neighbor. *We protect our neighbor!* As hard as that has been – not worshipping together in person, wearing a mask that is annoyingly uncomfortable, not gathering with family and friends, postponing celebrations of milestones in life, only leaving home for necessary outings, avoiding crowded places, not traveling, and the list goes on – *we are protecting our neighbor (and ourselves)*. We protect our neighbor today, so we will have a neighbor tomorrow. *It's 2020!*

In the Eighth Commandment, God speaks about how we are to treat our neighbor, and in Luther's explanation of that commandment he tells us “we should fear and love God so that we do not tell lies about our neighbor, betray him, slander him, or hurt his reputation”, and we can add ... *or endanger them with our careless, selfish activities regarding Covid*, “but [we should] defend him, speak well of him, and explain everything in the kindest way”, *and by our actions do all we can to protect them from this deadly disease. It's 2020!*

In everything we do, we find Jesus, the baby in the manger, the Word made flesh, at the heart of it ... even if *it's 2020!*

We have entered 2021 ... 2020 is now hindsight ... We go forward carrying the same brokenness, hurt, and pain that we had last year, but we also go forward having learned lessons and confident we are not going alone. We go forward in the presence of the baby Jesus, who will grow into the Jesus of the cross and the empty tomb, the Jesus who promises us new life.

Bathed in the soft glow of the light of Jesus, moving forward together with you in 2021,

Pastor Jean



Recognition of Baptism



January 10 is the “Baptism of Our Lord.” On the YouTube worship that weekend, we will recognize baptisms from 2020 and remember all of our baptisms. Those who were baptized this past year are encouraged to “join us”, and have your baptism candle there with you! We will ask God’s continued blessing on their journey in life, relight the candle to remember what God is doing in their lives, and send us all forth to continue as disciples of Jesus!



We Are Worshipping!

We really want to be back, to worship together, but our building remains closed. Why? Because we need to continue to protect people! Yet, we are still worshipping...and God continues to be with us. So, join our worship...

Online videos bring a message, prayers, and even music. Posted by 6 PM on Saturday on YouTube, you can access them through our web site: www.oursaviorswestsaalem.org/videos.

You can watch any time, and you can even catch up on previous weeks. Thanks to our music providers, lectors, and “peace teams” as they work with us to provide a worship opportunity.

DVDs are also available of our online service. If you, or someone you know, does not have the ability to watch online, but can use a DVD, let us know. Currently, we have eleven DVDs going out each week – we can do more!

Sunday morning (10:30 AM) “Zoom communion” – find the link on the home page of our web site, or contact the office for information on connecting via phone (like a conference call). We gather virtually for about 25 minutes – a message, time for prayer, and Holy Communion. Have your bread and wine/grape juice handy, and be a part of Body of Christ connecting even across the web!

For more info and updated details, check out the Covid-19 Response page on the web site.



The Lutfisk Challenge at Work!

Our annual Norwegian Dinner didn't happen – and that meant that we had no profits to share with community organizations and the programs and ministries that meet human needs – and are desperately needed this year.

But...YOU responded to the Lutfisk Challenge – our appeal to replace the monies that we didn't get – and after the council acted to augment the amount, we have over \$9000 to disburse! That is awesome!

Now, it's time to disburse. All women of the congregation are welcome to join the conversation. We'll meet **Sunday, January 17, at 9:30 via Zoom**. To participate on Zoom, you need a computer with microphone and camera. Or ... you can dial in on the phone like a conference call!

Contact the church office for login information. We want you to be a part of this ministry!

Adult Bible Study

Bible study, via Zoom (or dial in as a conference call) continues, on

Wednesdays from 9:30 to 11 AM. We discuss the gospel reading for the coming Sunday. Some great conversation and probing discussion – all from the comfort of your home!



Details on how to join us are on the Covid-19 Response page on our web site, or call the office and speak with Pastor Jon. Either way, we'll get you on board!

Christian Education Update

Sunday School



It's hard to believe we are almost at the half-way point of our year. We thank our kids for doing a great job under interesting circumstances presenting their Christmas program, "Miracle in the Manger". We also thank Wendy Kane for doing the costumes; and a HUGE thank you to Pastor Jon for doing all of the recording and video work. If you missed it, go to the church website and check out Hanging of the Greens Part 3.

Just a reminder – the weekly Sunday School lessons are available on YouTube. The links for the grade appropriate videos can be found on the church website (www.oursaviorswestsalem.org -- resources/videos). You should also receive an email from Pastor Jean each week with the worksheet that goes with the lesson. *If you aren't getting the emails (check your spam file), please call the church office (786-0030) and we'll get them to you. Or ... if you don't have email, we can send them to you via the Post Office.*



From the Youth Director ...

As the new year begins, we are working on ideas for ways to connect safely. Watch your emails for details of future gatherings and projects.

In the meantime, take care, and stay safe!

Wendy Kane

youth@oursaviorswestsalem.org

Confirmation Schedule for January



- 6th grade** Wednesday Zoom sessions at 6 PM
- 7th grade** January 6 – Video posted to YouTube
January 13 – Zoom session – boys at 6 PM
girls at 6:30 PM
- 8th grade** January 6 – Video posted to YouTube
January 20 – Zoom session at 6 PM
- 9th grade** December 30 – Video posted to YouTube
January 6 – Zoom session at 6 PM



college
connection

As our college students are studying in challenging environments at home or on campus, we keep them in our thoughts and prayers. This month please pray for: **Anna Johnson** (Viterbo), **Hannah Anderson** (UW-L), **Jen Iliff** (WTC), **Rebecca Michael** (UW-M), **Taylor Jones** (UW-Whitewater), **Cody Anderson** (WTC), and **Emily Steele** (Viterbo).

Watching over you ...

The days are growing shorter, the weather is getting colder, the white stuff will soon be swirling, and the Covid virus continues to wreak havoc with our world.

We want to keep everyone as safe as possible with the recent increase in COVID positive cases, especially those most at risk in our community. If you need help with grocery or medication pick up, shoveling snow, raking leaves, minor home repairs, a friendly person to chat with, or other needs, please call the church office (786-0030) and let us know how we can be of service. We have members ***ready and willing*** to help out with these tasks.



Willing and Able ...

Early in the pandemic several folks stepped up and offered to help with tasks for members unable to get out. Thank you for thinking of others, but needs did not materialize as we expected. Now, as the winter descends, we want to be prepared for the changing world. We are rebuilding our list and welcome your call (or email) to say you are still willing to be a part of caring for our community. As the needs arise, we will get you connected.

Stewardship for All Seasons



Thank you to all who have returned "statement of intent" cards for 2021. Over 80 cards were returned, even in the midst of these challenging days. With them came the "intent" to increase giving by close to \$20,000. Those resources are a GREAT start to making our ministry goals for 2021 happen. So, thank you again!

If you have not yet returned your statement of intent, there's still time! Your faithfulness in sharing what God has entrusted to you makes our ministry happen, and these days, it is desperately needed!

With the pandemic some of our timing has changed, but we still look forward to new worship opportunities, especially on Wednesday evenings, to increased youth ministry, and to maintaining the excellence of the many ministries we currently carry out. You make that happen – you make a difference in the lives of people. So ... once more ...

THANK YOU!



Synod School of Theology

The La Crosse Area Synod School of Theology is a great way to expand your horizons, learn about Bible, faith and life, and make some great connections! The school currently meets virtually, via Zoom, on Thursday evenings. In January an Intro to the Bible course is offered January 7, and then from January 14-February 18 it's "Prophets!" There is a small cost, but the learning is great, and all from the comfort of home. For more information check out the synod web site at www.lacrosseareasynod.org/synod-school-of-theology or contact Pastor Jon.

2021 Offering Envelopes ...

If you have not received your 20201 envelopes, please let Kris know in the office and she will gladly get some for you. If you are new to Electronic Giving or are changing your amount in 2021, please fill out a new form and get that to the office ASAP. **Also note: it is possible you will have a new number in 2021, so be sure to use the 2021 envelopes beginning in January.**



Scrip Cards Available



We continue to have Scrip cards available for purchase in the office during the day. We ask that you call

ahead to make sure someone will be there to get the cards for you.



Just a reminder ... we have Kwik Trip, Kwik Trip car washes, Woodman's, Festival, and Ship Shape car washes.



Proceeds go to help World Hunger and Our Savior's Youth programs.



Pictorial directories



If you had your picture taken, there is a directory waiting for you. If you chose not to have your picture taken, but would like to have a directory, they are available for \$5 to cover the cost. The directories are available in the church office (call before you come to make sure we are here).



Annual Meeting

After considerable discussion, the Congregation Council has decided to delay the 2021 Annual Meeting. At the present time the council believes this is the best option. We do have the ability

to hold a virtual meeting but would prefer not to meet in that manner. Instead, we hope at some point in the next six months a meeting can be held in person and safely, either in the building, or, believe it or not, outdoors!

Until a meeting can be held, the council will operate with the current budget framework. The additional ministry goals for 2021 will be added into a new budget at that time. In addition, council members whose terms are scheduled to end have agreed to serve until their successors are elected, as directed by the constitution.

While the council acknowledges the importance of the annual meeting, it also believes that the meeting is best held in person, where the congregation can prayerfully and faithfully work together to further the ministry of Our Savior's.

For more information contact Steve Ahles or Pastor Jon.

2021 Annual Report deadlines



We are looking for reflections from the various committees, teams, and ministries to be included in the annual report. For those providing reports, please note we need them, preferably electronically, in the office as

follows: **Written Reports by Wednesday, January 6** and **Financial Reports by Monday, January 11.**



Congregation Council

The Congregation Council met via Zoom on Monday, December 14, with President Steve Ahles presiding. At this meeting the council:

- Shared in study and prayers reflecting on the gifts we have given and received.
- Approved the minutes of the November Council Meeting, and received the November financial report.
- Heard an overview on what has been happening with our various ministries, including some collaboration between Feed Our Children, the Community Assistance Fund, and the Teachers Association.
- Heard that the entire amount of the PPP Grant has been converted to a grant rather than a loan, as expected.
- Discussed the Norwegian Dinner appeal, and voted to set aside \$4000 from the PPP Grant to augment the amount donated to community organizations.
- Heard an update on the tech project.
 - Adopted a Continuing Resolution enabling a virtual congregational meeting if needed.
 - Designated the pastors' housing allowance for 2021.
 - Decided to give a small gift to regular employees not currently engaged in work due to Covid.

The next meeting of the council will be held Monday, January 11, at 7 PM via Zoom. If you have questions, or if you have ideas for enhancing the ministry of Our Savior's, contact Steve Ahles or one of the pastors.

Financial Support Ministry



**THANK YOU
FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

THANK YOU!!! Thank you for your continued financial support of our ministry together! You make a difference in the lives of children and adults, in those across the globe, and those right here in our midst.

Financial gifts can be shared in a variety of ways. You may choose to mail in your envelope, or use 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.oursaviorswestsale.org/giving. Among the giving options:

- Electronic transfer...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.

However you give, 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!***



Shopping Online?

Our Savior's has an account with "Amazon Smile." If you shop with Amazon, you can support our work together by designating your "Amazon Smile" contribution to Our Savior's.

Thrivent Choice Dollars



Remember that if you are a Thrivent member you may have "Thrivent Choice Dollars" to direct. Our Savior's is one of the many potential recipients of your choice dollars, but your direction needs to be made each time. A number of Our Savior's folk direct their choice dollars – do you? See Thrivent's web site for more information or stop by the office and we will help you out.



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!

January Dates for your calendar:



January 3 - Zoom Communion at 10:30 AM

January 6 - Confirmation @ 6 PM

6th grade via Zoom

7th grade video posted

8th grade video posted

9th grade CLASS via Zoom

January 10 - Zoom Communion at 10:30 AM -
Baptism of Our Lord

January 13 - Confirmation @ 6 PM

6th grade via Zoom

7th grade CLASS - via Zoom - **NOTE TIMES!**
(Boys 6 PM + Girls at 6:30 PM)

8th grade - Off

January 17 - Zoom Communion at 10:30 AM

January 20 - Confirmation @ 6 PM

6th grade via Zoom

7th grade - Off

8th grade CLASS - via Zoom

January 27 - Confirmation @ 6 PM

6th grade via Zoom

January 24 - Zoom Communion at 10:30 AM

January 31 - Zoom Communion at 10:30 AM

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

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



Check your spam



We have been sending out more emails to share information or keep in touch lately. It has come to our attention that many of you – mostly those of you with **yahoo.com** email accounts – have not received our communications because the emails have gone to your spam file. So ... please take a minute to check your spam files and see if you have any communications from church/pastors that you may have missed over the last several weeks (and maybe even months!). This is especially critical for those of you with confirmation and Sunday School aged children. Please let us know if you have missed dates, deadlines, and information so we can get you up to speed and make sure everyone has the information needed.

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