

# Our Savior's Voice

Our Savior's Lutheran Church

359 Leonard Street N - West Salem, WI 54669

[www.oursaviorswestsalem.org](http://www.oursaviorswestsalem.org)

608-786-0030

## December 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.***

# **Our Savior's Voice**

## **December 2021**

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## Pastor's Reflections

As I write this, five weeks to go. Five weeks from this very moment, Advent will have passed, Christmas services done, and it will be “clean up:” and New Year’s diet time.

But not yet. First, Advent and Christmas. But not like last year. Not virtual, with no one in the sanctuary, but the two of us and a camera. This year, this year – it will be Christmas!

Well, sort of. The virus is still out there, doing nasty things. Area hospitals are pretty much full, numbers remain high, and for some, the virus has become a matter of life and death – literally!

So, we will journey through Advent, and celebrate Christmas, but do what we need to do to remain safe. And to protect others. To live out our calling to care for others, to even be sacrificial for the sake of those around us. The younger, the older, the vulnerable. After all, isn’t that what Jesus would do? Oh, that’s right – he did that. We call it the Crucifixion!

But for the moment, Christmas. The good news is that we will be in person this year. We will gather for Advent worship each week, and then Christmas Eve and Christmas Day will be in the building.

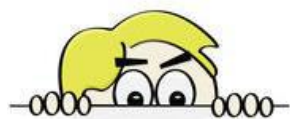
Remember, however, that we want to be safe – and to protect others. And so we shall. Check out the article in this newsletter about upcoming worship opportunities for all the details, but in a nutshell here’s the scoop:

- Christmas Eve worship will have some limits on numbers. You will be asked to sign up so you know you have a seat.
- Meanwhile, we’ve added an extra service to accommodate the numbers.
- Yes, we will still need to be masked. The science is pretty clear – masks work!
- There will be a Zoom service from the barn.
- A prerecorded video will be posted to YouTube.

Well, that sort of takes a bit of the luster off the Christmas star, now doesn't it? I mean, if we can't all gather, in a packed church, celebrating the season, what's there to celebrate?

I know. I get it. I look forward to Christmas Eve, to services that fill the building and voices proclaiming the joy of the season. It's always a wearying day for us, as we work through the services. Yet, at the same, it is exhilarating. As the crowd gathers, to sing with joy, hear the story, and see the candles, reminding us of the "light that shines in the darkness ..."

And now, with a smaller crowd, without the energy that comes from a packed house ... what's one to do?



Take a peek, that's what!

Look, there are some things I'm really excited about this year. Seriously!

- Advent worship – and especially the second week (December 8). Weather permitting, we will end the service in the parking lot, around the fire pit, with a final act of worship – and then – S'MORES! Yes, you read that right – Christmas S'mores!
- Christmas Eve we are going back to the barn for a Zoom service. OK, it didn't work last year, but I'm not giving up on that. Too awesome!
- The Prerecorded YouTube. Last year that video was viewed in Massachusetts...in California...in Illinois...in Michigan...and right here. The worship itself takes on new power knowing that it reaches places we simply cannot otherwise reach.

But is that enough?

Of course not. All of that makes this Christmas a bit more appealing. But I'm still stuck with a virus and a less than half packed church.

Until. Until I take a peek. Take a peek inside that small, wooden box. The box we call a manger. Until I see the child who lies there.



These are times that tire us out, and the Christmas experience, for the second year in a row, is not what we want it to be. But as hard as it is for us to hear and accept, Christmas is not about what we want. Christmas is about what God is up to! And even in a somewhat twisted, broken, hurting world, God is still at work.

That is a deeper sense of what this season is all about. We imagine, with a somewhat “romantic” view, that Christmas is about a quaint scene – an old barn, a silent night, with gentle animals all around, and the soft glow of a newborn child brightening this quiet moment.

But really, the Christ child came into a dirty, cold, smelly place, in the midst of a very hard, painful, and overwhelming world. This is not about a serene moment. It is about God acting in the midst of a broken world. As the world cries out for life, God delivers!

Sound familiar? Isn't that our world today? Hard, painful, overwhelming? Yet, there it is. The manger, the Child, the hope. God at work 2000 years ago; God at work today!

And so yes, Christmas is not yet what we want. But it will be what God wants it to be. And since this is “God’s gig,” not ours ... that’s OK. In fact, that’s great – because when Christmas is God’s thing, then Christmas is about God acting to bring life. Beginning in the manger, moving on to the cross, and then to the empty tomb. God at work, life in us.

Not the way I want it, but it is what I need! This year, especially!

*Pastor Jon*





## Christmas Greetings!

*Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to all of you, from the staff at Our Savior's! We treasure the community that gathers here, and we are grateful to all of you for your support and your partnership in the gospel of Jesus. May God's blessings in the Christ Child be yours during this Holy Season, and throughout the coming New Year!*

*Pastor Jon, Pastor Jean, Kris, Wendy, and Josh*



### **Lakeview Caring Tree**

If you took a tag from the Caring Tree for residents at Lakeview Health Center, please remember the gifts (*wrapped and including the information from the tag on the outside of the package*) are due back in the office by December 5<sup>th</sup> or you can take them directly to Lakeview, but please let the office know that's what you did or we may be giving you a call looking for the gift. Thank you for helping to make Christmas just a little brighter for our neighbors!

# Building and Office Update



We have good news! Kris Seeger's surgery went well, and she is on the mend. Kris will be out of the office until mid-January, so please continue to keep her in your prayers. We anxiously await her return!

Until then, building and office hours are somewhat limited:

- Open Monday-Wednesday-Thursday 8:30AM - 2 PM (closed over the noon hour).
- Building only open Friday 9AM - noon.
- Building and office may be open other times – call ahead to make sure!

Kris has prepared a number of things ahead of time. Pastor Jean will take care of essential items that arise in the office, and Pastor Jon will pick up extra preaching duties.

We are grateful for our team of volunteers staffing the office, and for those assisting with the newsletter. And thanks to all of you for your patience and understanding!

**\*\* Please note we require everyone in the building to wear a mask! \*\***



**Pastoral Acts:**

Baptism – Bennett Vike – November 28



## Worship Updates!

Saturday @ 6 PM

*No worship December 25*

Sunday @ 8 and 10:30 AM

To ensure the safety of all our worshippers, especially children, masks are required. *For our kids' sake we can wear a piece of fabric!*



*Meanwhile...*

## Virtual worship options

We **Zoom the later Sunday worship** (check out our home page for the link and have your communion elements handy!)

We also record the **Saturday worship and post it later that evening as a YouTube**. You can access this worship through our web site: [www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/videos](http://www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/videos). You can watch any time, and you can even catch up on previous weeks.

# Midweek Advent Worship



**Wednesdays, 7 PM**

*Also posted to YouTube by Thursday morning  
[www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/videos](http://www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/videos)*

## **December 1** **Hanging of the Greens**

*Getting the house ready!  
We sing...and decorate...and celebrate...*

## **December 8** **Seasonal “Ups and Downs”**

*Weather permitting, we end worship  
outdoors with a treat! More “s-mores” anyone?*

## **December 15** **Children’s Christmas Program**

*Come and see kids...and families...share  
the message of the season!*



# Christmas Eve and Day

In Building worship

Carols and Holy Communion

1:30 – 3:00 – 4:30 – 6:00 PM

+ Masks required

+ **SIGN-UP** for up to 65 at SignUpGenius

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F044CA5A629A7F85-worship>

*Or contact the office*

+ *Limited extra seating available*

## Late Evening Holy Communion – 10 PM

+ Masks required

+ *NO sign ups!*

## **Zoom Holy Communion – 8 PM**

*Zoom link on the home page of our web site*

*We're out at the Holthaus Farm,  
in the barn, in the cold and the dark,  
yet the light of the Christ Child  
brightens our world and warms our  
hearts.*



**Make sure you have bread and wine/juice as we celebrate the Sacrament together, along with music, a message, and time for reflection, even in a troubled world!**

## **YouTube Worship**

*Video posted on web site by 1 PM*

Lots of music, a message, the Christmas Gospel, and most of all, the Christ Child. Last year this service was watched from Massachusetts to California!

And then...

## **Christmas Morning! Holy Communion worship at 10 AM**

+ Masks required

+ NO sign ups!





Sunday School continues to hum along as we live into our new routine. We are getting to know new bible buddies, memorize bible verses, and learn new songs. It has been fun to see new “eyes” each week. Remember, it’s never too late to join us!

Our December schedule:

PreK/4K to 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade – December 5 and 19

3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> Grade – December 12

December 26 and January 2 – NO Sunday School

We have begun working on our virtual Family Christmas program – *“Do Not Be Afraid”* by *Illustrated Ministries* – that will be shared in worship on Wednesday December 15 at 7 PM.



Thank you for bringing your offering envelopes to be shared with Lutheran Disaster Relief.

Thank you, also, for faithfully wearing your masks!



## Confirmation Ministry

Confirmation ministry, i.e. “disciple making,” continues! For December...

**6<sup>th</sup> graders** meet Wednesday evenings (Dec 1-8-15-22) at 6 PM to continue their journey through the Bible, with Corey Sjoquist as their guide.

### 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders

- Meet on Wednesdays at 6 PM as they complete the Apostle’s Creed.
  - o 7<sup>th</sup> grade – Dec 1
  - o 8<sup>th</sup> grade – Dec 8
- 7<sup>th</sup> & 8<sup>th</sup> graders will also go caroling in the community on December 15, from 6-7 PM. *You can join them*
- Dec 22 - Electives

**9<sup>th</sup> graders** meet December 1<sup>st</sup> after the 7 PM worship – we’ll be done by 8PM!

See Pastor Jon for more information on our “disciple making” ministry!

## ‘Tis the Season...

Looking to get...and share...the joy of the season? Join our 7/8<sup>th</sup> graders as they go Christmas caroling on Wednesday, December 15, from 6-7 PM. A bit of a walk, some good singing, and the sharing of the real spirit of Christmas! See Pastor Jon for more information.



## From the Youth Director ...



### ❖ *2022 ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis*

The early bird registration period has passed, but if you're still interested in being a part of this national gathering and spending time with others from across our Synod, talk to Wendy and we'll make it happen.

### ❖ *It's not too early to be thinking about summer ...*

- 6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> Graders – you asked for it ... Confirmation Camp at Sugar Creek Bible Camp. Watch for details in the new year or talk to Wendy.
- High School students ... check out Riverboat Week at Sugar Creek

Wendy Amundson, Youth Director

[youthsaviorswestsalem@gmail.com](mailto:youthsaviorswestsalem@gmail.com)

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: **Sydney Hammes** (UW-M), **Wesley Leren** (WTC), **Dagan Hemker** (UW-M), **Jordyn Schurhammer** (UW-L), **Alysha Hessey** (WTC), **Meghan Hansen** (Winona State), and **Lizzie Averbeck** (UW-Stout).



## Adult Bible Study

Bible study, live or via Zoom, continues on **Wednesday mornings from 9:30 to 11 AM**. We take time to ponder the gospel reading for the coming Sunday, so each session is “stand-alone.” NO previous Bible knowledge is needed – just come and enjoy some great conversation and “faith-deepening” discussions.



We meet in the Gathering Area. If you'd rather join via Zoom, contact the church office or Pastor Jon.



## School of Theology

The La Crosse Area Synod School of Theology resumes classes January 5 with a “one-night intro to the Bible” session, in person, at Trinity Lutheran Church, in Sparta. The session runs from 5:30-9 PM and is offered without cost as a gift from the Synod.

Regular classes begin the following week and are currently via Zoom, from 6:30-8 PM. The Old Testament Writings will be offered January 12-February 16, with Pastor Mark Jolivet as the instructor. Cost is \$20, plus book costs. You can register at the La Crosse Area Synod web site ([lacrosseareasynod.org](http://lacrosseareasynod.org).)

Pastor Jon and Dori Jensen are on the School of Theology Board; Carolyn Karl, Lynette Ender, and Wendy Amundson are currently taking classes – check with anyone of them for more insight and information!



## **(re)Take the Lutefisk Challenge!**

Thank you! A number of folks have stepped forward to (re)Take the Lutefisk Challenge! The absence of a Norwegian Dinner means there are no profits to be shared with ministries and programs that meet the needs of people. But YOU have responded again this year to restore those dollars and continue our outreach into the community. THANK YOU!

There is still time – the distribution to ministries will be made in January. We invite you to join us...in thanksgiving for gifts of life even in tough times...or maybe a “Christmas gift” for the Baby Jesus? Your gift will make a difference.

You can (re)take the challenge by sending in your gift marked Norwegian dinner. Or just “lutefisk!” Or go to the giving page on our web site ([www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/giving](http://www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/giving)) and make your gift there.

For more information, or more conversation about the challenge and the needs of people, contact one of the pastors!

# Good Gifts!

Looking for that gift to give to someone who already has enough? ELCA Good Gifts are the perfect answer! Again, this year, you can get the gift of bees, piglets, goats or chicks. New are fruit tree seedlings, seeds and gardening tools, hygiene kits, child vaccinations, Bibles and health care visits, all between \$10-\$50, and other gifts for higher costs. Give a gift that goes beyond our view and help a family in need.



A display is in the Gathering Area and we will use the honor system this year. You can take an ornament, find the matching card and place the money in the box. There will also be order forms if you want to order a larger cost item, like “sending a woman to farmers field school” (\$75). So many great options to fit your gift giving!

Some examples of how you can use “Good Gifts” ...

- Our daughter went back to school and is now working as an RN so the gift of personal protective equipment (\$25 PPE) for a frontline healthcare work will be meaningful to her, appreciating its importance.
- With us being new grandparents, the gift to our son and his wife for vaccinations for a child (\$30) will be appreciated as they are aware of its importance in keeping bodies and communities healthy.

These gifts are great for teachers, your mail person, neighbors, music lesson teachers, and the list goes on! Call Phil and Judy Gilbert (608-797-3001) to assist with your order, if needed.

*Thank you for supporting our neighbors around the world!*

# Salvation Army



The Salvation Army is again looking for folk to assist in the serving of their evening meals in La Crosse. They are asking Our Savior's to take the first Friday of each month, starting December 3. Can you help?

Teams of three are asked to come to the Salvation Army building at 223 N 8<sup>th</sup> Street at 4:15 PM. Serving lasts a bit over an hour. It's a great service and witness, but also a moment to build relationships with folk who are in need. YOU can be the presence of Jesus for them, and maybe even discover that THEY can be Jesus to you!

Sign up on SignUpGenius, or call the church office.

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F044CA5A629A7F85-salvation>



## Squares to Sew

The quilters set an all-time record sending 302 quilts to Lutheran World Relief in

October!! Now the work begins again ... and you can be a part of this amazing ministry! If you have time (and a sewing machine at home) ... we have a project for you! Quilt tops are an essential part of each and every quilt, and the ladies are in need of extra hands to help sew these tops. Bags of pre-cut squares to make one top are available in a basket in the coat room. Help yourself to a bag (or two), and when you're done creating your quilt top, please return it to the same basket. Have some fun and make a difference in the lives of those in need. *And ... thanks for helping!*



## **Mission Endowment Fund Making A Difference - Again!**

The Mission Endowment Fund Committee met recently to make disbursements for this year. A record \$17,300 was available for the 19<sup>th</sup> year of disbursements. Over that time over \$200,000 has been disbursed to ministries and organizations that meet the needs of people in our community and beyond.

Disbursements this year include:

- \$4000 for Afghan refugee resettlement
- \$2000 to the ELCA World Hunger Appeal
- \$2000 to Sugar Creek Bible Camp
- \$1000 to Sleep in Heavenly Peace, to provide beds for children who have none
- \$1000 to the Warming Center to assist the homeless
- \$1000 to New Horizons to meet the needs of families in crisis
- \$1000 to St Claire Health Mission to provide medical care to those without insurance, who cannot afford care.
- \$1840 to Our Savior's to increase our Sugar Creek Camperships
- \$3460 to Our Savior's, as required, for a future capital project as determined by the Congregation Council

Every year the proceeds of the fund make a difference in the world. Consider including the fund in your estate planning, and make a difference for years to come! See Pastor Jon or Melody Schmitz for more information.

## Still Looking...



We are still eager to hear from you! The last few years we have followed a process of “group discernment” to lift up leaders for the congregation. We’ve asked you – who do you see around you who has the gifts to be a leader in this community of faith? That process worked well – we’ve received good names, people who then discerned that God has both gifted and called them to the ministry of leadership. Thank you!

But, this year...that’s a bit tougher to do! Still, we believe that God is at work in our midst. So...we’ll ask the question...who do you see? Even though we can’t be together in worship, who do you see who has the gifts and abilities to partner with us?

We invite you to share the names you discern. Send them on to Pastor Jon, Pastor Jean, or Jen Linse. Your eyes and ears might just be the way God chooses to bring new leaders into the mix!





## Congregation Council

The Congregation Council met on Monday, November 8, with President Jen Linse presiding. At this meeting the council:

- Continued to have conversation and discussion about young people and their needs. Ended the time with prayer.
- Approved the minutes of the October 11 Council Meeting, and received the October financial report.
- Heard an overview on what has been happening with our various ministries.
- Heard an update on the tech project and the landscape project.
- Discussed staffing options during Kris Seeger's absence.
- Heard a report from the Reopening Team.
- Discussed Christmas worship options, with a preference for in-building worship done safely.
- Heard that due to supply chain issues the tech project will be delayed another 4-5 months.
- Opted to meet in December at Pastor Jon and Pastor Jean's home, with a meeting and small Christmas gathering for council members.

The next meeting of the council will be held Monday, December 13<sup>th</sup> at 7 PM, at Pastor Jon and Pastor Jean's home. If you have questions, or if you have ideas for enhancing the ministry of Our Savior's, contact Jen Linse or one of the pastors.

## ***Did you know...***



The CARES Act adopted earlier last year allows you to take the standard deduction in your Federal income tax and (for 2020 and 2021 only) take an extra \$300 deduction for charitable giving (\$600 for married couple, filing jointly.) Giving to Our Savior's, or any other 501(c)(3) organization counts.

Why these provisions? To encourage charitable giving during these difficult times. But, as always, consult a qualified tax advisor for all the details.

## **Year End Contributions**



With the end of the year fast approaching, this is the time to make sure you are up to date on

your financial support of our ministry at Our Savior's. *Your gifts **DO** make a difference!* You can mail your gifts to the office, or go to the church website: [www.oursaviorswestsalem.org](http://www.oursaviorswestsalem.org) for secure electronic giving options.

In order to be included on your 2021 giving statement, gifts must be received in the church office **by noon on December 31, 2021.**

Any checks dated 2022, regardless of when they are received, will be acknowledged for 2022.



## Fall Stewardship Ministry

Thanks to all who have submitted “statement of intent” cards for 2022. If you have not done that yet, we would love to hear from you! You should have received a card in the mail; if not, or if you can’t locate it, contact the office.



We are using statements of intent to determine our ministry goals and objectives for 2022, so your response is very important!

Thank you again – and thank you for all your support of our work together!

## 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 worship, by mail, or placed in our locked mailbox. You can also make gifts electronically. Go to [www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/giving](http://www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/giving) to find out more!

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

## 2022 Offering Envelopes ...

If you haven't already received your offering envelopes for 2022 in the mail, you should be receiving them soon. As the New Year begins, if you still need envelopes, please let Kris know in the office and she will gladly get some for you. If you are new to Simply Giving or are changing your amount in 2022, please be sure to fill out a new form and get that to the office ASAP. **Also note: it is possible you will have a new number in 2022, so be sure to use the 2022 envelopes beginning in January.**



## ANNUAL REPORT

### Thinking Ahead ... 2022 Annual Report deadlines

It's hard to imagine, but the new year is right around the corner. And that means getting an annual report together to share with the congregation all that has happened in 2021. We are looking for reflections from the various committees, teams, and ministries to be included in the report. Please note we will need those reports, preferably electronically, in the office as follows: **Written Reports by Wednesday, January 6** and **Financial Reports by Monday, January 11.**



## Looking for ... friendly folks to Usher at worship

As we worship in-person, we are looking for friendly folks (individuals and families!) to welcome those in attendance. We will have the doors open, all we ask is that you greet those who are here, have them sign in, and make sure they get a bulletin. Easy tasks and such an important part of our welcoming ministry. If you are able to spare a few minutes prior to worship, let Pastor Jean know, or better yet, sign up using the SignUpGenius link found here or on the website:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F044CA5A629A7F85-ushers1>

## Thanksgiving Goodie Bags

Thanks to Tiffany Janisch and her family for planning and preparing the annual "Thanksgiving Goodie Bag" gifts for our shut-ins. Thanks too to all who delivered the bags, connecting with those who are isolated. Yet again, "God's work, our hands!"





## **Scrip Cards make great stocking stuffers!**

### **Scrip Cards News**

**Now available** ... Culver's Scrip cards – \$5, \$10, \$20 and \$25! We earn 10% on the purchase of each Culver's card. Grab a card and enjoy a *Butterburger* and frozen custard!



Don't forget we continue to have Kwik Trip, Kwik Trip car wash, Woodman's, and Ship Shape car wash cards.



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

## **Vacation**

Pastor Jon and Pastor Jean will be on vacation December 27-30. There will be limited office hours that week, although the locked mailbox will be checked regularly. If you have emergency pastoral care needs, please call the office and follow the directions on the answering service. Your message will get through!



Web Site: [www.oursaviorswestsalem.org](http://www.oursaviorswestsalem.org)  
**OUR SAVIOR'S STAFF**

Pastor Jonathan Schmidt, Senior Pastor 612-0217  
Email: [pastorjon@oursaviorswestsalem.org](mailto:pastorjon@oursaviorswestsalem.org)  
Pastor Jean Schmidt, Associate Pastor 612-0217  
Email: [pastorjean@oursaviorswestsalem.org](mailto:pastorjean@oursaviorswestsalem.org)  
Kris Seeger, Administrative Assistant Church Office: 786-0030  
Email: [office@oursaviorswestsalem.org](mailto:office@oursaviorswestsalem.org)  
Wendy Amundson, Director of Youth Ministry 518-9593  
Email: [youth@oursaviorswestsalem.org](mailto:youth@oursaviorswestsalem.org)  
Email: [youthoursaviorswestsalem@gmail.com](mailto:youthoursaviorswestsalem@gmail.com)  
Jill Iliff, Treasurer  
Email: [treasurer@oursaviorswestsalem.org](mailto:treasurer@oursaviorswestsalem.org)  
Linda Berg, Organist/Choir Accompanist/Director of Music  
Email: [linda@oursaviorswestsalem.org](mailto:linda@oursaviorswestsalem.org)  
Laurie Noelke, Handbell Choir Director/Assistant Worship Musician  
Eric Sorenson, Senior Choir Director  
Karen DeSchepper, Financial Secretary  
Josh Corning, Custodian



## **Newsletter Deadline – December 10**



## **Care and Share Food Pantry**

The Care and Share Food Pantry is open Saturdays, 10 AM to Noon. Food can be dropped off during office hours. Thank you!

Our Savior's Lutheran Church  
359 Leonard St N  
West Salem, WI 54669

Non-Profit Org.  
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West Salem, WI  
Permit #21

Change Service Requested