



# The Scroll



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## EXPECTING

Message from Pastor Linda

With our daughter and son-in-law expecting twin boys this spring, it comes as no surprise that pregnancy and birth have been on my mind a lot. Our family is in a place of expectation and anticipation as we await the arrival of these long, hoped for little ones. What will they look like? What type of temperaments has God written into their DNA? What gifts and talents will God bless them with? All questions that we will simply have to wait and see. Are we excited? Without a doubt!!!

In this season of waiting, Michel and I have received regular updates on babies' growth. We have been watching the parents-to-be busily getting ready. They already have had to begin re-arranging their lives to make space for them. They are in the midst of re-arranging their home and constantly thinking about what they will need for the babies in order to best care for them.

Though it may seem slow-going now, it won't be long until Lauren begins to feel the strain and stretch on her body, and all the aches and pains that come with carrying a baby. And then of course, labor will come - birthing pangs that cannot be sidestepped or avoided. But when all is said and done, it will be so beyond worth it. Their joy and wonder will consume any anxiety, or pain, or impatience before.

Pregnancy and birth aren't only a physical phenomenon in our world, they are also a spiritual one. God is often referenced in Scripture as instilling a dream, a vision, a promise within His people individually and/or collectively. Still today, the Lord, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, imbues seeds within our souls that are pregnant with possibility. He does so even in those places we believe are beyond hope. May we be reminded our God who is able has a history of bringing forth life out of barren or dead places!



As 2023 recedes and the new year races up to us, what new thing has God placed in you? What dream is

beginning to form in you? Laura Woodworth writes, *"We may be unsure of the exact details, but we have an idea. It's easy to presume, but until we've wrestled through the labor and delivery, the future is fuzzy. We hold the form of it in our heart and mind, but until it is out there for the world to behold, we can only venture an educated guess as to what shape the dream will take."*

In the meantime, what will you need to re-arrange or set aside in your life to make space for this vision, kicking and living in you? What will you need to do to prepare? It will likely become harder than you expected to carry this vision. You may grow impatient and uncomfortable and perhaps even grumpy or disillusioned. But when that time comes, for its fulfillment, you will be amazed and it will be far more than one could ever have imagined.

Finally, what vision or dream does God have forming within Salem this year, for He is always doing a new thing. Next month, on Saturday, February 17, we will be hosting an all-day, church-wide workshop, "Finding Your Why?" led by our Conference Associate Superintendent Barbara Ettinger and Rev. Dierdre Gray-Clark. This will be a wonderful opportunity to gather as a church family and discover together how the Spirit of God is moving here and to help us to discern and define our calling for the coming year.

May this year be one of expectation and joy for you and for our church. Happy New Year!

For I am about to do something new. See, I have already begun! Do you not see it? I will make a pathway through the wilderness. I will create rivers in the dry wasteland. ~ Isaiah 43:19



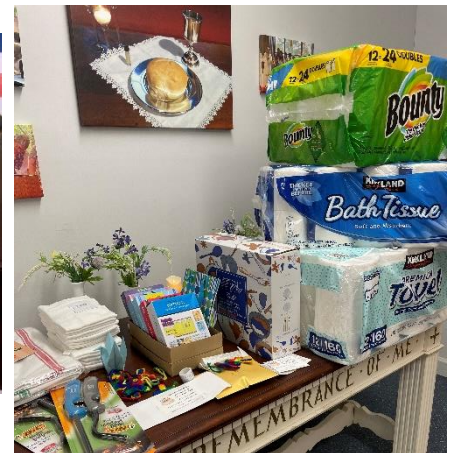
**LET THE ANTICIPATION AND CELEBRATION BEGIN!**

This year’s start of Advent dovetailed with Communion and the church’s 135<sup>th</sup> birthday celebration. Two of our Confirmation students, Nathan Fisher and Liam Hurley, were our readers for the first Sunday in Advent. They showed poise and confidence as they offered the Advent meditation and prayer, and lit the first candle of Advent.

Later in the service, Christi Guptill and the children went downstairs to begin preparation for the annual Christmas pageant.

Following the Worship service and Communion, the Fellowship Committee hosted a potluck lunch and had a elegant, delicious Birthday cake to mark our 135 years of ministry and outreach. We are grateful that God has continued to work through the faithfulness of our small church.

Salem is grateful for the birthday gifts of necessary items we use throughout the year, including postage stamps, cleaning products, birthday cards, paper products, and more.



**Christmas Concert Moves and Delights Many**

As time moves further away from the disruptive year of Covid, more people are comfortable going to larger events. This year was our best turnout for the Choir’s annual Christmas concert since 2019. Our listening guests were treated to a very special evening of sacred song and laughter that Susan Anthony-Klein and Salem Choir\* had begun preparing for since September! The concert was enriched by the addition of three wind instruments played by talented Jennifer Anthony-Bogue (Flute), Daniel Williams (Clarinet) and Peter Wortman (oboe). Included in the evening program were a few Christmas carols sung by the audience with John Quist leading.



The 12 Days of Christmas, with a slightly adapted arrangement, and the added artwork of Robin McHan, added an element of fun. Who can forget those different pictures popping up above the choir, or Steve Allison joyfully waving that Partridge in a Pear Tree up high?!

The hour-long event concluded with the choir singing its traditional song: We Wish You a Merry Christmas! You may listen to the digital recording of the concert via this [link](#).



\*Choir Members: Steve Allison, Patti Anderson, Betsy Bailey, Roger Cannavaro, Julie Fredlund, Cathy Greiner, Lauren Kelly, Eileen Kelly-Aguirre, Jim McDonough, Robin McHan, Tim Meeker, Craig Nelson, John Quist, Pam Spear, Diane Swanson



### Christmas Brunch Served with Large Helping of Joy

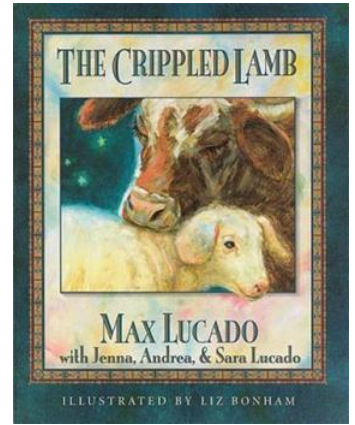
A number of people from our church and the community came this year for our annual Christmas Brunch. Although Robin McHan, one of Salem's mainstays at this event, was sick, Diane Swanson, Holly Camp, and Pastor Linda worked together to serve our guests a robust brunch, with the traditional baked ham, breakfast casseroles and a large, fresh, colorful fruit salad. Some contributed their holiday breads and cookies to round out this sumptuous feast.

When Susan Klein discovered her driveway had ice on it and couldn't get down it in time for the brunch, Steve Allison stepped in as our song leader. He even treated us to his own playful (or should we say 'colorful?') limerick set to a familiar Christmas tune. We also had the pleasure of hearing Sallie Stevens and Steve sing an impromptu duet! As one guest commented, Sallie has some pipes!



## Not Just Any Christmas Pageant!

Each year our church, along with many others, is blessed with a children's presentation of the Christmas narrative. Though the storyline doesn't change, the telling of it can be quite creative and imaginative! This year was no exception. Christi Guptill, our Sunday School Coordinator, introduced our young members to Max Lucado's book, *The Crippled Lamb*. It tells of a lamb that is crippled and feels it has no worth, and nothing to offer the baby Jesus.



The children and youth had a ball re-enacting the story. They excitedly donned their costumes – stars, angels, shepherds, Mary and Joseph, a lamb, and oh yes ... a cow! The angels presented a choreographed dance, the stars raced about, and yes, the cow and lamb made all of us laugh. What an opportunity for the children to look back upon with fond memories. When all was finished, each family was gifted the book by Max Lucado to take home with them to read again and again.



## ANTICIPATING THE LORD'S COMING IN WORSHIP

In December we held two very different but special services. The first was our annual Blue Christmas service on the longest night of the year. It is one that is more somber in nature as it is a time when we gather together to acknowledge that the holiday season doesn't bring joy and excitement. In fact, for many the glittering lights and the happy jingles harshly expose the emptiness of heart or home as we long for loved ones no longer here. The burden we carry for those near and far suffering from disease, war, or injustices weighs more heavily upon us. The trials we are facing seem as insurmountable as ever.

During this year's Blue Christmas service we lit four blue candles, each signifying a particular yearning within us. The first one was to remember those we have loved and lost. This candle is for all those whom we grieve. The second candle was for all who are struggling with issues involving physical or mental health. It represented the losses and sadness that comes from those events that enter our lives, uninvited, and unbidden – leaving us in shock, making us numb, or playing over and over again, 'this is not the way it's supposed to be.' The third candle was lit for all those who wrestle with the chains of addiction. And the last candle was lit to remember the faith and the gift of hope which the birth of Christ offers to us.

After the candles were all lit, worshipers had an opportunity to come and light a candle of their own to honor their own private longings. We closed the service with prayers of hope, and a song of promise.



Our Christmas Eve service was upbeat and joyful. Salem's Choir sang beautifully arranged anthems and the congregation sang Christmas carols that were interspersed with the reading of the Christmas narrative. Pastor Linda, using an illustration from Charlie Brown's Christmas, gave a short meditation of how, with the coming of Christ, we may 'fear not.' We can let go of our insecurities, fear and anxiety, trusting Christ is with us – our true Peace and Security. The service ended with its traditional candle lighting and singing of *Silent Night, Holy Night*. The Christmas Eve offering received exceeded \$1000 and will be evenly split between Washington/Warren Food Pantry and the church's Benevolent Fund.



## IMPORTANT UPCOMING EVENTS

- **New Winter Sermon series**  
Between now and the season of Lent, Pastor Linda will be preaching a sermon series on *the Questions that Jesus Asked*. Did you know that the gospels record over 300 questions that Jesus asked of others?! We won't be able to cover all of them, but we will learn and grow together from this in-depth study of some of them.
- **New Sunday morning Adult Study starting January 7**  
Author/Pastor Amy Julia Becker will be leading a new series on Jesus' *Sermon on the Mount*, using the popular podcast The Bible Project as one of her sources of study. You can be sure the study will be dynamic and interesting. Sunday mornings, 9:30 am.
- **Covenant Orientation Class, January 14 and 21 (following Worship)**  
Pastor Linda will be leading a Covenant Orientation Class for any who are interested in learning more about our church, our denomination, or how to become a member of our Church. If you are interested, please speak with or email her at [pastor@salemcovenantchurch.com](mailto:pastor@salemcovenantchurch.com)

- **Annual Church Business Meeting, January 21 (following Worship)**

This important meeting will cover our church finances, voting for our 2024 Budget, new Council members, and new members of the Church. We will also share an update about the kitchen upgrade and air conditioning project for the Sanctuary. We will also speak about our vision for 2024 and hear the congregation's ideas or concerns.

- **'Find Your Why' church-wide Workshop, Saturday, February 17, 9am-3pm**

The entire church family is invited to come and participate in an exciting all-day workshop, *Find Your Why*, led by Associate Superintendent Barbara Ettinger and Rev. Dierdra Gray-Clark. The workshop is based on the book, *Finding Your Why* by Simon Sinek, which offers practical and effective guidance in helping organizations discover and discern their purpose. Working together, our church will explore why are we doing what we do? As we listen to each other's stories in the context of life together here at Salem, we will begin to shape with greater clarity how and what we want to do in the coming months and years. Other churches who have participated in this all day workshop found it to be valuable, empowering and energizing.

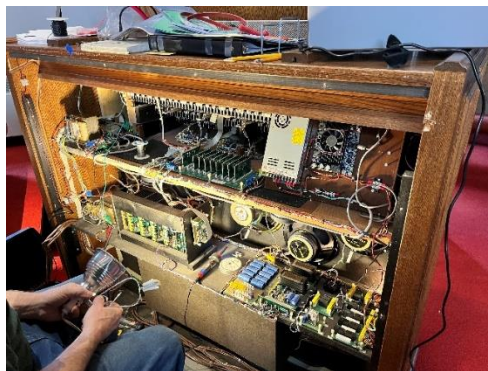
## Property & Grounds

While the kitchen commercial upgrade has stalled indefinitely (due to powers beyond the church's control), maintenance and repairs continue. This past month, the drywall/paint job in the Parsonage stairwell to the basement was completed after many, many years!



Over the past 25+ years, the church's Organ has never been serviced. Out of the blue, a Church Instrument Contractor, Rich Calusine, very familiar with our Johannes Sweelinck 30, reached out to Salem. He apparently had been given a short list of customers who had purchased their instruments through a New England Piano & Organ Dealer that closed its business. Years later now, he was provided the complete list of clients for which our church was on.

In both November and December, Calusine made several trips to assess and service the organ which was in sore need of attention. Many parts were updated and/or replaced. The multi-direction light on the organ even works again! Now the organ has a full range of sound and this very intricate instrument is living up to its high quality! It sounds beautiful in our Sanctuary, especially with Susan at its keyboards.



## *Thank You!*

Dear Salem family,

My heart overflows. Thank you for your tremendous support over the past year. I appreciate every single card, note, text, email of love and encouragement, and the kind remarks and helpful feedback you have shared with

me. Thank you for your very generous Christmas gift! It's hard to find words that can adequately express all that I feel inside for you. I love serving here; I love ministering alongside you. I am blessed beyond measure!

With sincere gratitude,  
Pastor Linda

## JANUARY CALENDAR

**January 1 – Happy New Year!**

**January 5** – Loaves and Fishes, 3:30 pm

**January 7** – Worship & Communion

- Church programs for children, Youth and adults resume

**January 15 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Day** – Church office Closed

**January 17** - Council meeting, 7:00 pm

**January 21** – Salem's Annual Business Meeting, following worship

**January 24** – Evening Prayer, 7:00 pm

**January 22-26** – Covenant Mid-Winter for Clergy (Professional Development)

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

Deb Andrews	3
Adam Douskey	12
Bob Dickinson	14
Claire Caco	16
Susan Anthony-Klein	18
Mike Andrews, Jr.	19
Tim Meeker	19
Helga Hershey	19
Caroline Marich	22
Haleigh LaBoy	25
Edward Caco III	25
Cathy Greiner	27
Rachael Andrews	29
Owen Light	29
Marilee Becker	30

## JANUARY IN REMEMBRANCES

January 1, 2015 - Ethel Hollister (Holly Camp's mother)

January 7, 2021 – Alexander Robert Haas (Steve Haas's brother)

January 8, 2023 – Nancy Whitehead Picket (Edwin Whitehead's sister)

January 17, 2011 - David Taylor (Sara's husband & father to Sebastian and Oliver)

January 17, 2022 – Bill Houldin (Peter Houldin's father)

January 18, 2021 - Delores Davenport (Pastor Ieisha Hawley's mother)

January 19, 2020 - Norma (Peterson) Cummings (Ginny Napolitano and Elaine Babiyan's aunt)

January 19, 2022 - Julie Hicks (Tiara Hicks' mother)

January 22, 2009 - Lois Butler (Robin McHan's mother)

January 25, 2019 - Ruth Alex (Mike Alex's mother)

January 25, 2023 - Kathy Douskey (Mary Ann Lundberg's