



SALEM NEWS

2312 Marietta Avenue Lancaster, PA 17603

June 2020

Epistle of James: Part the First

What an awkward month it's been! I began my tenure with Salem on 20 April 2020 – even all those 20s seem strange. With a medical pandemic swirling all around us, it was hard to get on my feet. But I did.

Sunday worship was the first challenge to tackle. I needed to rely on skills that others have about Internet streaming and service development. I found myself bound to producing slides that substituted for a bulletin. That first service was terribly awkward for me and, I believe, for everyone else who was there.

Fortunately, that group helped me understand what would make everything flow better. And then it took another two weeks to fully grasp what they were saying. By Sunday 4, everything felt much better to me and to the others.

The folks, who have been the worship support on a Sunday morning and committee at other times, are wonderful! What a great bunch of people who want the best for Salem and want success for me.

The last 10 days of May provided an opportunity to begin reaching out to individuals identified by Pastor Roben as in need of some ongoing support.

Phone calls are not the best way; they do work. I've even had a Zoom "visit" with one person. That was new and exciting to me.

One of the big questions that congregants often have has to do with pastoral availability. Well, there are several parts to that for me. I have scheduled office hours on a Tuesday and Thursday mornings. It's always best to make an appointment rather than drop in. Until social distancing is not a concern, I'm also available for phone calls during the day or some evenings. Emergencies are another time that I am accessible.

I do keep my "church phone" on my nightstand for something that emerges during the night. At the same time, it is not physically attached to me 24/7. When I'm in the yard working in the garden or at the grocery store, that phone is not near me. I check the voicemail messages regularly. If I can't be reached during an emergency, there are people on Church Council you could contact.

As the summer unfolds and existence moves toward the more familiar, I look forward to meeting and greeting all of you. Let us be blessed as we learn to know each other further.

Pastor Jim

Communication from Church Council

Dear Salem Members and Friends,

What a crazy time this has been and continues to be! It has been over 2 months since we had to close Salem due to the COVID19 virus pandemic. I apologize for the lack of communication provided to those of you without internet access. This letter is the first step in our promise to correct that omission and keep you updated on the status of Salem activity.

Pastor Roben completed her Interim Pastoral services with us on April 18, 2020. We very much appreciated all her efforts to prepare us for a new Settled Pastor. She gave us a nudge to move forward when we needed it; but always with compassion and grace. We will miss her and wish her well in wherever God leads her next.

A new Bridge Pastor, Pastor Jim Yoder, started his service with us on April 20, 2020. Pastor Jim is from Lebanon and is retired from full time Chaplain services in hospitals, nursing homes and hospice. He is in our church office on Tuesday and Thursday mornings from 9:00 AM to 12:00 PM. He is eager to get to know all of the Salem family. For anyone wishing to meet and talk with him, please call Kelli in the church office to set an appointment. In that way, we can assure social distancing for your safety. Also please wear a mask when visiting the church.

Our search for a new Settled Pastor has come to a slow down. The Penn Central Conference has put a hold on processing any new Pastor Candidate Profiles until churches have reopened. We did meet with a candidate just as the pandemic hit and continue in communication with that candidate. However, any active discussion will not continue until churches are open again.

We have continued to Live Stream our worship services on Sunday mornings at 10:00 AM through our Face Book page - Salem UCC (rohrerstown) . In addition we are now posting the recording of the worship services on our web site which is salemuccroh.org. Click on the link on the left side that says Worship Service Information and then Worship Services online to watch the services.

We have a team that has begun to plan for the re-opening of our church. A survey was sent out through our email distribution list. For those without email, one of the re-opening team members will be calling you to ask a few questions such as: (1) when would you be comfortable returning to church — when we are in the green phase? when a vaccine available? etc. (2) what precautions would make you more comfortable when you return to church such as wearing masks, social distancing, etc.

Now that the Governor has moved Lancaster County to the Yellow Phase effective Friday, June 5, 2020, the Bright Start Academy Day Care has permission to reopen. They will open on Monday, June 8, 2020 at 25% of their capacity to assure social distancing and will be following all CDC and Dept of Health guidelines for children and staff. Members of our re-open team met with the owner and staff of the Daycare to review their plans in order to assure the health and safety of all who enter our building. We also discussed the coordination of the cleaning process that will be followed by their staff and our church custodian. In addition, neither the Daycare staff or children will be entering the Fellowship Hall at any time, which is where we will be worshipping once our church reopens for services.

We pray that we will all be able to worship together soon; but until then, we will stay connected through mailings and phone calls.

Yours in prayer,
Susan Gerhart, Salem Council President

WORSHIP

A Family Reunion

There are many publications written as guides for worship and preaching. God's hand must have been waving over the surface of the deep last year for the Westminster-John Know Press. Their volume 2 of *A Preacher's Guide to Lectionary Sermon Series* was published in 2019. With a focus on Genesis, the "summer series" in this liturgical year is all about Family Reunions. With everything that has kept us from being a church family recently, we need to move into the next few months recapturing our sense of family. There's a question for each of us to answer: What would the perfect family reunion look like?

June 7, 2020 Trinity Sunday

Have a slice of bread and a cup of juice ready for Holy Communion this Sunday!

Theme: God's Perfect Family: The Trinity is a perfect relationship

Texts: Genesis 1:1-2:4, Matthew 28:16-20

Narrative: The three persons of the Trinity are in perfect harmony with one another. There is uniqueness and unity. The love that flows from one to the other is pure, complete, eternal, and unconditional. They have always shared and always will share in mutual joy and peace.

Questions: What does perfect harmony look like for Salem UCC? Is our love for each other and the community pure, complete, eternal, and unconditional?

June 14, 2020 The Second Sunday after Pentecost

Theme: God Has Chosen an Imperfect Family: God's purpose is to bless all families through one family.

Texts: Genesis 18:1-15, Matthew 9:35-10:8-23

Narrative: God chooses two elderly nomads who are beyond childbearing years. They are nobodies, living in a tent, not sure of their future. Not only are they old and rootless, they are also finding it hard to trust God. It has been years since God promised them a child.

Questions: With everything happening around us keeping us out of control, how strongly do we completely and fully trust God? What kind of "offspring" has God promised us?

June 21, 2020 The Third Sunday after Pentecost

Theme: A Painful Shortcut: We get impatient, but God redeems our mistakes

Texts: Genesis 21:8-21, Matthew 10:24-39

Narrative: God's family is in the middle of a mess. Still childless, Sarah authorizes a custom, and a child, Ishmael, is born to Abraham and Hagar, Sarah's hand maiden. More than a decade later, Sarah has a child, Isaac. She becomes anxious about preserving the bloodline. Again, Sarah takes a second shortcut to resolve her jealousy and fear.

Question: Do we ever look at what God has promised us and take things into our own hands when it the promise is not fulfilled as soon as we would like it to be? Do our shortcuts prompt family disfunction?

Re-Opening Update

The building remains temporarily closed. Other than church staff and Council and Committee members, all persons, including vendors, must schedule an appointment to access the premises. The fact that someone has a key does not automatically permit access to the building. Procedures are being developed by the Re-Opening Committee for knowing who has been in the building and where those individuals have been so that deep cleaning can be made further ensuring a safe environment for everyone. Vendors, who need access outside of posted office hours, will need to be accompanied by a Church Council designee. The general consensus at this time is that worship services will continue to be live streamed and in-person events will not begin until Lancaster County has entered the green phase.

Bright Start Academy Opens June 8th

Administration from Bright Start met with members of the Property Committee and Church Staff on May 29th. This productive meeting identified the opening procedures for day care facilities distributed by the CDC and PA Department of Health. Bright Start demonstrated the ways they intend to be in compliance with their guidelines and requested support from Salem UCC as part of the process. Specifically, persons who have business with Salem are asked not to come to the building between 6:30 am and 9:00 am Monday through Friday. This is when Bright Start staff will be screening and escorting clients to their rooms. Bright Start indicated that they have communicated with the families of their clients concerning all aspects of safety needed and procedural expectations.

Other Meetings

The Property Committee is drawing up guidelines for other groups that meet regularly in the building. At this time, other meetings are still temporarily suspended. The Property Committee will communicate directly to each entity.

Congregation Survey

The Re-Opening Committee is extremely pleased with the response to the recent survey via Internet and phone call. The gathered information has become the basis for decision-making. Most importantly, participant preferences are being used to guide how and when "in person" events, including Sunday worship, will be managed.