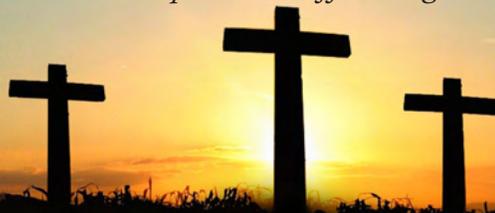


LIVING OUT GOD'S LOVE

Salem United Church of Christ is an Open and Affirming Congregation



SCRIPTURE READINGS FOR SEPTEMBER:

Week of Sep 6:

Exodus 12:1-14
Psalm 149
Romans 13:8-14
Matthew 18:15-20

Week of Sep 13:

Exodus 14:19-31
Psalm 114
Romans 14:1-12
Matthew 18:21-35

Week of Sep 20:

Exodus 16:2-15
Psalm 105:1-6, 37-45
Philippians 1:21-30
Matthew 20:1-16

Week of Sep 27:

Exodus 17:1-7
Psalm 78:1-4, 12-16
Philippians 2:1-13
Matthew 21:23-32

MARK-ET PLACE

The Secret of Christian Joy in a Joyless Time

The Letter to the Philippians has been called Paul's happiest letter. The note of joy sounds throughout the four chapters of this New Testament book. By one count, some form of the word "joy" appears in Philippians at least 16 times. Among the most quoted of its joy passages today is "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). You may even have that verse memorized without ever having sat down to memorize it.

The dominant note of joy in Philippians can lead us to miss the circumstances out of which this letter arose. The full circumstances were hardly happy ones. Paul was in prison when he wrote Philippians. His confinement is mentioned at least four times at the start of the letter (1:7, 13, 14, 16). No doubt jail was abysmal. Still, the notes of complaint and despair do not dominate this letter. Joy and gladness emerge from Paul's abysmal situation.

This combination of joy amid stressful circumstances led my academic grandfather, Andrew W. Blackwood (no real relation other than that he was my preaching professor's preaching professor), to write in 1941 that Philippians is an ideal book for a day when the world is in turmoil (*Preaching from the Bible*, p. 159). The turmoil Blackwood had in mind in 1941 was, of course, the waning days of the Great Depression, the war then happening in Europe, and which was, by December of that year, to involve the United States. He was interested in teaching mid-20th century Christians under strain how to find the secret of Christian joy the Apostle Paul found in a 1st century prison.

We are in our own kind of confinement in 2020 and under our own kind of strain. There is now a confluence of troubles. Commentators on our time speak of four: COVID-19, an economic crisis, a climate crisis, and a racial crisis. Meanwhile, there is a political divide that is widening in relation to all four. Can we now turn to Paul's letter of old and find material in Philippians to help us discover the secret of Christian joy in a joyless time?

Answer that question for yourself by taking some time to read Philippians on your own. It is brief and can be read with ease. Mark in your Bible, or otherwise make a list, of verses which seem to show factors contributing to Paul's ability to be joyful even while in prison. When you are done, your list will show what Dr. Blackwood termed "the secret to Christian joy."

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Below is a list of the factors I scribbled down as ones which I think contributed to and sustained Paul's joy. See if your list matches mine. Paul had --

- A heart of gratitude, 1:3
- A sense that the purposes of God were at work in present circumstances, 1:12
- A determination to be joyful, 1:18c
- A high and worthy example to follow, 2:5ff
- A sense of what truly matters, 3:7ff
- A healthy sense of forgetfulness, 3:13
- A concentration on Jesus Christ, 4:13, 19

Which of these factors is the most important? It is hard to say. Each one can make a good beginning. All work together for good (see Rom. 8:28). Separately and together may they guide your way toward an increase of joy in this otherwise joyless time.

MEY

VIDEO RECORDING DUO DESERVES THANKS

The people of the Old Testament had *their* Tribe of Benjamin. We have *our* "Tribe of Benjamin." Our Bens consist of Ben Borgerding and Ben Zhe. You have not seen them, but many of you have been enjoying their work.

Ben Borgerding, one of the grandsons of Harlan and Gerri Hall, has been taking the lead in recording and editing our online worship services. This includes filming the prayers and sermons on Wednesday evenings at the church, and later editing in the recorded music, including the lyrics, and the scripture readings pre-recorded by our Council members and others.

Ben Zhe has been assisting Ben Borgerding each Wednesday with the setting up and the tearing down of lights, camera, and microphone.

Both these young men have been joys to work with over these many months of our online presence due to the Coronavirus. The faithfulness they have shown to the church in this work is second to none, as is their promptness each and every week. Their dedication is admirable and does not go unnoticed. They have been a delight to greet and spend time with all summer long, and Salem owes them a debt of deep gratitude.

Ben's and Ben's behind the scenes work and their personalities brought joy to the life of -- shall we say? -- "the on-air talent." He especially wants to single them out for praise and recommendation. If you have need for videography work in your future, whether for a wedding, graduation, or other ceremony, contact the church and we can help put you in contact with Ben Borgerding who will produce something nice for you.

School is starting now at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for our "Tribe of Benjamin," making it increasingly difficult for them to be traveling to Verona on a weekly basis. Their dedication, though, is such that they will continue to lend what aid they can moving forward.

Kevin Booth has been present at the church each Wednesday to lend such aid as the Bens may have needed, and Jon Pundt has been loading the final product to our website. Thanks are due to them as well.

CONFIRMATION CLASSES

Eighth and Ninth Graders and their families can mark on their calendars that Confirmation classes will begin on Wednesday **September 23**, at 6:30 P.M.

How they will begin remains an open question.

No doubt confirmands will have enough online stuff in their lives by way of their school work, and yet another Internet class may be more burdensome than helpful. Since we will be a small group, we may meet outside at the church, with safeguards in place, until the weather no longer permits, at which time we will move inside with similar safeguards.

But all that is yet to be determined. If you are a Confirmation family, send Mark a note with your reaction(s) to this idea.

CAMPUS CONTACTS



Salem loves to stay connected with college and university students who are away from home.

Please let the church know your student's physical and email addresses so we can help them stay connected with their church home.



SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS

7: Doris Waldmann
8: Cathy Kwilinski, Megan Price
9: Reid Adams
10: Eliese Yurs
11: Bernice Hamilton
12: Conlin Bass
13: Blake Adams
15: Joan Gering
16: Lisa Hart, Nathan Bahr,
Violet Remus
18: Deb Zurbuchen
20: Tucker Malueg
21: Allison Hansen, Kathy Homb,
Marisa Denu
24. Aayla Bahr
25: Lydia Durnen
26: Ellie Burgenske
29: Kevin Cashman
30: Anna May Rhiner

EVENING WORSHIP BY THE FIRESIDE AND MORNING WORSHIP ON THE LAWN



These are devotional gatherings designed to bring our people together safely and informally.

Evening Worship by the Fireside is Sundays at 6:30 PM.

Morning Worship on the Lawn is 10:00 AM Mondays.

These services rely on a plan of worship that depends upon scripture, prayer, and conversation but not preaching or music. The evening assembly will have a fire only if the temperature is not prohibitive. *Attendees are instructed to bring their own Bible, their own chair, and to wear a mask.* Chairs will be available for those with none to bring. We will aim for social distance and spiritual togetherness.

We suppose the gatherings will be small, at least under the 25-person maximum officially in place. Please phone the church (845-7315) or send an email myurs@salemchurchverona.org to let us know if you plan to attend (this will help us safeguard the 25 person maximum).

INTERGENERATIONAL FAITH MINISTRIES

What is an Intergenerational or Crossgenerational faith community? A faith community where people of all ages learn from each other, creating relationships and growing in faith together. The Youth Ministry Team is exploring intergenerational ministries and sees the value of building and developing relationships across age groups:

- Research has shown the active presence and engagement of an intentional and consistent adult relationship (parent, grandparent, mentor, minister) is the single greatest influence on a young person's faith.
- Personal relationships form a strong connection to the desire to grow in one's faith.
- The support and commitment of all ages to follow their congregational baptismal vow – to raise children in the Christian faith – must be present in congregational life.

Periodically, throughout the year, intergenerational activities will be programmed to promote this community of all ages together. Our first Intergenerational program will be Sunday, September 27, 10 am. This will take the place of morning Sunday School Classes.

- A zoom gathering
- A short video with break out rooms for discussion
- The FAITH5

We will be implementing The FAITH5 with our Salem Intergenerational Community.

What is the FAITH5? A simple faith practice that can be used every night in every home to connect faith to daily life. The FAITH 5 connects church to home, faith to life, and parents to kids in a powerful way.

As Mark 18: 3 calls us to change and become like little children, let's all come together before God as a **child** expecting awe-inspiring greatness. Be sure to watch the Friday, email blast for info to connect with the September 27th Intergenerational Gathering.

If you would like to continue the conversation or be part of program planning, please reach out to Janet Dahl, jdahl@salemchurchverona.org.

LIVING OUT GOD'S LOVE THROUGH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Sarah Pundt, Director of Christian Education

608-692-3239 or spundt@salemchurchverona.org "Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. - Matthew 7:7(NIV)

Remember the sabbath day and keep it holy. (Exodus 20:8)

As a society, we tend to struggle with a healthy work-life balance. Now that many of us are working from home and going to school remotely, the natural separation between work, play, and rest becomes blurry. Technology is a wonderful thing as it allows us to maintain our relationships and work, almost as if nothing has changed around us. However, this benefit can quickly rob us of sacred space. Be sure to create sabbath time each day for yourself or your family. Our current situation requires that we intentionally set this time aside for ourselves. The work will still be there in the morning when you commute from the bedroom to the living room and you will do a better job when you have taken care of your mind, body, and soul.

Sunday School

Weekly Sunday school will resume online via Zoom for all ages **Sept. 13**. Current participants will automatically receive a link to join their group. If you are new and would like to join a group, please contact Sarah Pundt.

PreK-Grade 5 @ 9am

For this age group, we are offering weekly online Sunday school and materials for at-home learning. Families can choose which format suits their needs the best: only online, only at-home, or a combination of those two options.

Middle and High School (time TBD)

This group will meet online weekly. We have three enthusiastic teachers and a brand-new curriculum to spark conversation and exploration. Please watch your email for details on meeting time and the link to join.

Adult Sunday School @ 10am

Please join us online for conversation around a variety of topics intended to expand your understanding of the Bible, Christianity, and what it means to live out your faith daily. Our first unit will be led by Mark Yurs:

LEANING ON GOD IN A DIFFICULT TIME

Reading Key Chapters of the Book of Revelation

The Book of Revelation is not peculiar truth about a mysterious tomorrow. It is strength for today, just as it was when it was first written. It tells the good news of God's overarching presence in a world full of turmoil. It offers a life-line of hope to people tempted to give in to despair. It helps beleaguered people persevere through turbulent times by telling of the promise and power of God. Our class will read a number of the key chapters of Revelation with a particular eye on its promise for today.

HELP NEEDED

Please contact Sarah Pundt if you are interested in serving in any of these education ministries.

- Choose a Sunday to lead the children in a prayer and a Bible story online. Materials, training, and technical support are provided.
- Choose a Sunday to lead the online adult Sunday school class. You can lead a topic of your choice or materials will be provided for you. Technical help is also provided.
- The Board of Christian Education is seeking new members. BoCE members provide support to the Director of Christian Education including programming, budgetary spending, and organizing group events. Join us and help shape the Christian education program at Salem.

Small Groups Online

Parent's Promise 9/3 @ 7pm

This group is for parents of tweens, teens, and young adults. Join this circle of parents for online conversation as we support each other in raising young people of faith. On 9/3, we will discuss chapters 4 & 5 of "Growing With: Every Parent's Guide to Helping Teenagers and Young Adults Thrive in Their Faith, Family, and Future" by Kara Powell and Steve Argue. The book may be purchased on Amazon, however, you do not need to read the book to participate in the conversation. Please contact Sarah Pundt for the Zoom link to the gathering.

Politics and Spirituality: *How do we come together as "one nation under God"?*

This new group began meeting just prior to lock the lockdown last March for discussions about politics in our nation and how to have a faith-filled reaction to the stress and uncertainty we encounter daily. We have not gathered for discussion since March, but here are some resources for those who are interested. Please contact Sarah Pundt if you would like to organize a small group virtual conversation regarding these or other related topics.

Koinonia 9/17 @7pm

This group is open to women for a time of conversation and fellowship. Please contact Sarah Pundt if you would like the like to join our next virtual gathering.

Our Faith Our Vote 2020

- Check out the resources on the UCC national website <https://www.ucc.org/ourfaithourvote>

Tuesdays for Nurture webinar series

- Follow this link to register for upcoming webinars and receive email updates. https://www.ucc.org/search_results?q=tuesdays+for+nurture . The webinar on Sept. 1 will cover the topic of voter suppression. You can watch each webinar live or save the recording for later viewing.
- These previous webinars of interest are available on YouTube:
 - » Faith in Politics with Senator Elizabeth Warren
 - » ORGANIZE THE CHURCH: Voter Registration, Education, and Mobilization (featuring Stacey Abrams, Leah Daughtry and Traci Blackmon)
 - » Building Bridges of Faith Across Political Divides

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CALENDAR

September 2020

- 9/3 Parent's Promise @ 7pm
- 9/13 Sunday School Program resumes for all ages
- 9/15 BoCE @6:30pm
- 9/17 Koinonia @7PM

SALEM YOUTH NEWSLETTER

September 2020

Wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here!

Don't worry about anything, but pray about everything. With thankful hearts offer up your prayers and requests to God. Then, because you belong to Christ Jesus, God will bless you with peace that no one can completely understand. And this peace will control the way you think and feel.

–Philippians 4:6-7 (Contemporary English Version)

I have a t-shirt with a message scrawled in big letters across the front: "You worry too much. I got this. ~God." Underneath that note from the Lord is the verse at the top of this page, from Paul's letter to the Christians living in the city of Philippi. I wear my shirt as a reminder to myself that worries don't need to rule my life.

I tend to have a lot of anxiety. Even when I'm not worrying about a particular thing, my brain has a habit of being on high alert about nothing. To be honest, a lot of mornings I wake up with a sense of dread about nothing in particular. Dreading nothing in particular feels a lot like dreading everything. That is not a good thing, or even a normal thing, but it's a challenge that I deal with in my life. I hope you can't relate to that. If you can, please know you are not alone. There are other people who understand. More importantly, there is a God who knows your struggle and desires to give you peace.

Even if you don't have a major problem with anxiety, you know what it is. Anxiety can creep into your mind when you think about all the demands that life places on you. Schoolwork. Family relationships. Social media. Friendships. Your emotions. Your body. The news. The pandemic. The future. None of us knows exactly what to expect when school starts this year, and that does not feel good.

Back to the verse above from Philippians.

In one way, what Paul is saying is kind of annoying. Just don't worry about anything! That sounds like the sort of advice you would get from someone who never worries about anything.

However, since you've read all about Paul in the New Testament, you know that he is not just throwing rainbows and smiley faces at you. Paul knew all about anxiety, along with shame, fear, grief, and a lot of other difficult emotions. He knew the inside of a prison cell and the pain of chronic illness. He knew the frustration of living with his own flawed personality. Just like us.

So when Paul says that God will bless you with peace, you can take that promise to the bank. No matter how you are weighed down today by worry, anxiety, or any kind of trouble, peace is on the way. It's your birthright and your destiny as a child of God.

One more thing: if you are dealing with feelings of sadness or anxiety that are hard for you to handle, please ask a trusted adult for help. That could be a parent, an adult leader at church, or a teacher. Or visit salemchurchverona.org > Ministries > I Need Help to find more resources.

Praying that you may experience the peace of Christ that passes all understanding,
Peace the world cannot give or take away,
Cathy Kwilinski, on behalf of the Salem Youth Ministry Team:
Janet Dahl, Cara & Nathan Bahr, and Sarah Pundt

UPCOMING EVENTS

The Youth Ministry Team is at work, planning programming for Fall 2020. Watch your email for details and announcements!

Sun, Sept 27 **10:00 AM**
Intergenerational Sunday School

Social Justice Corner

O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous, you who test the minds and hearts, O righteous God.

--Psalm 7:9

Until a few weeks ago, many of us had never heard of the Eastern European nation of Belarus. Pronounced "bell-a-ROOS", this nation of over 9 million people gained independence from Russia in 1991. Since 1994, they have been ruled by President Alexander Lukashenko. Lukashenko's government is a military dictatorship. His failure to manage the covid-19 pandemic in his country has caused him to lose what little support he once had. In August he declared victory in an election that was not free or fair by international standards.

The people of Belarus have responded to the election results by protesting in the streets in overwhelming numbers. Tens of thousands of Belarusians have demonstrated, demanding that the rightful winner (Svetlana Tikhonovskaya, the wife of a jailed critic of the president) be recognized. Peaceful protesters have been severely beaten in the streets. The police have imprisoned, threatened, and even tortured many of the protesters for the nonviolent expression of their beliefs.

In the United States we recognize the rights to free speech and assembly as two of the most basic rights we have as human beings. When the police violate these rights, especially through violence, we all need to speak out against that kind of abuse. Beating people for expressing an opinion is wrong whether it happens in the United States or halfway around the world in Belarus.

Let the government of Belarus know that decent people around the world reject their brutal crackdown on peaceful protesters. It may seem hard to believe that someone like Mr. Lukashenko would care what we have to say in Verona, Wisconsin. But human rights abusers thrive when they believe that the outside world does not know or care what they are doing to their people. Our voices combined with those of people around the world add up to pressure that can influence even a brutal dictator. To sign a petition through the human rights advocacy organization Amnesty International, go to <https://www.amnesty.org/en/get-involved/take-action/protect-peaceful-protesters-in-belarus/> and add your name and email address.

SEPTEMBER 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1 6PM - YMT	2	3 6PM - Worship on VHAT-98 7PM - Parent's Promise	4	5
6 10AM - Worship on VHAT-98 6:30PM - Evening Worship by the Fireside	7 Labor Day	8 6PM - Finance 7PM - Council	9	10 6PM - Worship on VHAT-98	11	12
13 9AM - PreK-Grade 5 Sunday School 10AM - Adult Sunday School MS/HS Sunday School (Time TBD) 10AM - Worship on VHAT-98 6:30PM - Evening Worship by the Fireside	14 10AM - Morning Worship on the Lawn	15	16	17 6PM - Worship on VHAT-98 6PM - Men's Fellowship 7PM - Women's Fellowship (Koinonia)	18	19
20 9AM - PreK-Grade 5 Sunday School 10AM - Adult Sunday School MS/HS Sunday School (Time TBD) 10AM - Worship on VHAT-98 6:30PM - Evening Worship by the Fireside	21 OCTOBER NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE	22	23 6:30PM - Confirmation Begins	24 6PM - Worship on VHAT-98	25	26
27 10AM - Intergenerational Sunday School 10AM - Worship on VHAT-98 6:30PM - Evening Worship by the Fireside	28	29	30			

SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER 2020



Devotional Booklets Available

Our Daily Bread, These Days and The Upper Room Devotional Booklets are available in the information box located next to the outdoor labyrinth. We can also mail them upon request. These booklets are provided by the Women's Guild.



Come visit "The Patio" at Salem. Meet a friend for conversation or enjoy this space for a time of reflection. On The Patio is an interactive Prayer Wall for individuals and families to use. Be sure to check it out.

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An Open
and Affirming
Congregation

CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

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Living Out God's Love
SALEM UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

