

Our Savior's Voice

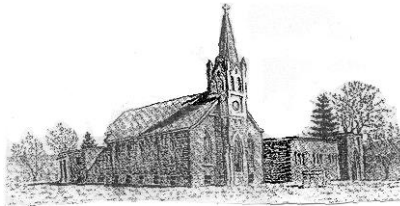
Our Savior's Lutheran Church

359 Leonard Street N - West Salem, WI 54669

www.oursaviorswestsalem.org

608-786-0030

October 2020



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

October 2020

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Pastor's Reflections

Back to "look out!"

Someone asked me last week, "Do you have any idea when we will be able to worship together again?"

"Yeah, Easter!" The look on her face said it all!



OK, maybe before Easter, but I'm not counting on it. Pastor Jean and I are convinced that Christmas worship will be "virtual" this year. I had hoped that by mid-October we could be back in the building. Then, numbers jumped, and they haven't improved.

Of course, we can blame schools and universities, and claim they make up different circles of people. But they are also our families, the servers in stores and restaurants, and they connect with those who connect with those who connect with ... you get the idea! In short, it's still out in the community, and it's big. Even the New York Times has noticed La Crosse County. We are a hot spot!

But wait, isn't this just an overblown reaction to something that's just a hard flu? Ask the person I spoke with earlier this week. The 35-year-old daughter of a friend, who had Covid in April has been back to the ER three times – kidney issues. That's not the flu!

Or, isn't this not really all that deadly, and haven't most of the "Covid" deaths been something else? Seriously? County Medical Examiners are required to state the cause of death. Do you really think that all the county medical examiners around the country are in on some kind of conspiracy?

Or, isn't this just going to go away right after the election? Sorry, that's not happening!

We're in this, we're in it together, and we're in it for the long haul. It's a matter of life and death, and lives are being affected. True, many get the disease, and, well, it's not that much. But others – many others – are ravaged, leaving behind what appears to be life damage, and still others – 200,000 in this country alone (more than the deaths in our five last wars) – are no more. Lives lost, and loved ones shattered.



So, wear your masks, physically distance, and stay safe. For your sake, for your loved one's sake, but most of all for the sake of your neighbor. That's Martin Luther's call to faithful living (check out my pastor's blog for June 28 on our web site or my pastor's page for July – or let me know and I'll send you a copy).

But back to worship – or not. That is why we are not yet back to “in-building” worship. Yes, I know some churches are, but others have shut down again. More importantly, we are called to faithful living as disciples and as a community (that's not me talking, that's Luther, so really, read the June 28 blog or July newsletter again).

As we have said all along, the church is not closed. The building, yes, but not the church – because in the end, the church is not bricks and mortar, the church ... is you! So, let's BE the church!

How? Start with worship. We are worshipping!

- Have you joined our YouTube worship? (Check out the home page of the website to access those services.) ***And if you can't get internet, let us know!*** We currently deliver 11 DVDs, with an estimated audience of about 45. We can add you to the list!
- And then there's “Zoom Communion” – 25 minutes on Sunday morning. Home page of the web site, again.
- And we still do “Driveway Communion” – almost 30 this summer with over 300 in attendance.

- And then...find it in this month's newsletter...the Lion's Shelter on October 11. Check that out!

Worship is happening – are you with us?

Beyond worship, Sunday School and Confirmation are happening, with a mix of virtual and outdoor “in person” experiences. Not what we want, but it's not about learning a bunch of facts – it's about forming faith. And these days it's about connecting as well as we can...and letting the Holy Spirit do the rest. Not to mention the Food Pantry, Feed Our Children, and pastoral care in a variety of ways (weddings, funerals, baptisms). The church is at work!

But wait...didn't I say YOU are the church? You are. We are doing what we can do, in ways that we have never done it, to meet a need we have never encountered. God is at work, the gospel is proclaimed, and people's lives are being changed. Right here, even in a closed building.



But...WHAT ABOUT YOU???

That's what you are doing too (I hope). Not here in this building. Instead, “out there!” That's what I meant last month, and in this month's title – “look out.” Look out there, in your little corner of the world. What do you see, what's happening around you, and what's needed? And then...what's God calling YOU to do about it!

“Look out” ...and then... **“look out!”** Because in the hands of the Holy Spirit, not only can you change lives, but God can (and will) change YOUR life!



So, imagine for a moment, hundreds of disciples of Jesus, in all sorts of places in our community, seeing, hearing, and responding to the needs around them. Not with their own abilities, but with the presence and the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Imagine those disciples, all making a difference in the lives of others. Not changing the world, just a small corner of it.



You have just pictured the Church!
It's you, it's God at work in you,
it's God changing lives through
your faithful discipleship.

Worship, Sunday School,
Confirmation, pastoral care, yes, but even more ... through YOU
the church is busier than ever!

So really, *“look out!”*

Pastor Jon

Check your spam



Now that things are gearing up this fall, we have been sending out more emails to share information or keep in touch. 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.





We Are Worshipping!

Lots of ways, lots of times!

Breaking news! A new worship opportunity in October...**in person at the Lion's Shelter**...see the article elsewhere in this newsletter for more information!

Online videos bring a message, prayers, and music. Posted by 6 PM on Saturday on YouTube, access them through our web site: www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/videos. You can watch any time, and you can even catch up on previous weeks.

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 11 DVDs going out each week, reaching over 40 individuals – and we can do more!

Drive-way communion – we come to your house, and outdoors, safely distanced, we share a brief (10-15 minutes) worship with communion. You provide your own bread and wine/juice, the driveway, and maybe even some neighbors – we bring the Word and a message. Contact us to get on the list. We've done almost 30 over the summer – with over 300 participants! Even as the weather grows cooler, we're ready to come to your place!

Zoom Communion...join us on Sundays at 10:30 in virtual worship, using the Zoom platform. Easy to do – just head to our home page, and click on the link. Have bread and wine/juice available as we take 25 minutes to hear God's Word and celebrate the sacrament.

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

Worship in Person!

October 11th @ the Lion's Shelter



Come and join us in an outdoor (of sorts) worship at the Lion's Shelter, October 11. We've reserved the shelter and plan a series of physically distanced, safe-space worship together!

Worship will be held at several times, with a limit of 50 at each



service. **Reservations are required, as are masks,** and "bring your own chair."



We currently have two times for worship, but if there is enough interest, we will add more!

Here are the details:

- **Sign up** online **OR**...contact the church office!
- Online using SignUpGenius ...
<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20F044CA5A629A7F85-worship>
- Directions (if you need them) are posted on our church web site home page.
- More times will be offered if there is enough interest, so if time slots are full, watch for more slots to be added.
- Worship (initially) is set for 9 AM and 10 AM.
- Worship will last about 30 minutes.
- **Bring your own lawn chairs.** When you arrive at the shelter, look for an "X" on the floor, and cluster your family around that "X" to allow for distancing from other family groups.
- **Bring your own bread and wine/grape juice for communion.** To avoid contamination, we will NOT be able to provide you the elements.
- **Remember that masks are required** – for your health and for the health of those around you!

An added bonus...*the pictorial directories will be available!*

Worshippers will be the first to get their copies.

We look forward to being together on October 11th!

Join us ...

**Sunday, October 18
2 PM**

**at Veterans Memorial Park
Shelter #4**



Note: The Packer game doesn't start until 3:30 PM that day!

Get your hiking shoes on and join the Forward Fearless & Faithful Team for a walk on the trails and a time to be together. We will gather at the shelter and head out from there for about a 45-minute hike/walk. You can hike as far as you want and meet us back at the shelter. Please wear your masks, and bring your own lawn chairs to rest when the walk is over and snacks/water.

**The long-awaited pictorial
directories have arrived!**

**Since
YOU ASKED**

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 will be available at the October 11 worship at the Lion's Shelter, or in the church office (call before you come to make sure we are here).

Christian Education Update

Sunday School



We had a great “re-connect” gathering on September 13 to see our kids and meet the teachers. We also handed out backpack tags and Sunday School materials. If you weren’t able to be with us that day, not to worry ... we still have packets available at church that can either be picked up, dropped off, or mailed ... just let Pastor Jean know how you would like to get them!

The annual registration form can be found on the church website and this year it can be filled out directly on line and sent in. It would be greatly appreciated if you would take the time to fill it out and get it to Pastor Jean.

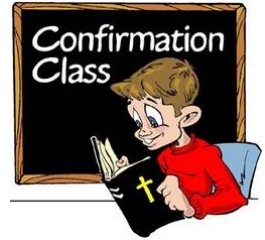
As we patiently (*I hope*) wait for things to settle down and for the time to come when we can gather together again safely, I invite you to watch the weekly Sunday School lessons on YouTube – the links for the grade appropriate videos can be found on the church website (www.oursaviorswestsaalem.org -- resources/videos).

I’m hoping the kids are enjoying the new curriculum and learning the songs and motions so we can share them with the congregation in person someday.

In the probability that we will not be able to be together leading up to Christmas, we have an idea for a **Christmas program video**. ***Kids, if you would like to be a part of that video, let Pastor Jean know and she will be in touch with parts and plans.*** Let’s have some fun and be really creative with this!



Confirmation



Confirmation ministry is underway! All four classes have met, and continue to be nurtured in faith and hope through Jesus!

6th graders meet via Zoom with Corey Sjoquist each Wednesday at 6 PM.

7th and 8th graders

- YouTube video posted by October 7. Watch it and complete/submit the review sheet.
- 7th grade “outdoor gathering” in the prayer labyrinth October 7 (6 PM – bring chair and masks). Zoom class October 14 (6 PM).
- 8th grade “outdoor gathering” in the prayer labyrinth October 14 (6 PM – bring chair and masks). Zoom class October 21 (6 PM).

9th graders

- YouTube video posted by September 30. Watch it and complete/submit the review sheet.
- Zoom class October 7 (6 PM). “Outdoor gathering” in the prayer labyrinth October 21 (6 PM – bring chair and masks).

YouTube video links are posted on the web site at:

www.oursaviorswestsalem.org/confirmation-2/

For the links to the various Zoom sessions, contact Pastor Jon.

A special thank you to group guides for their flexibility as we have started the year in a very different way. We are thankful for the time, energy, and witness you share!

More kids are ALWAYS welcome – and can join anytime!
Contact Pastor Jon for more information.



From the Youth Director ...

Connecting with our confirmation students continues to be a top priority. Cards and notes are being sent to remember their birthdays.

We also had our first few outdoor gatherings around the fire pit and they were a great success. Looking forward to many more gatherings and learning more about each individual as they grow in our faith community.

Times are different and challenging, but we are enjoying the creativity in finding safe ways to get together to break up our routines in life. Let me know if you have ideas, too!

Take care, and stay safe!

Wendy Kane

youth@oursaviorswestsalem.org



College Students ...

... wherever they are going and wherever they are living (at home or on campus), we need our college **students' emails and (campus) addresses**. Please get that

information to Pastor Jean when you know it. We like to keep in touch during the year and let our students know we are thinking about them and keeping them in our prayers.

Adult Bible Study

Bible study via Zoom (or dial in as a conference call) continues, with two opportunities each week!



Wednesday 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!

Sunday from 11 to 11:30 AM we check out one of the other passages appointed for that weekend. Again, lots of good connecting and exploring!

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!



Synod School of Theology

The La Crosse Area Synod School of Theology is still in session! Using Zoom technology, we continue to explore the Bible, faith, theology, and the church. Classes meet (via Zoom) on Thursday evenings, from 6-7:30 PM.

The next class offered is “The Holy Spirit,” October 29-December 10, taught by Pastor Karyn Bodenschatz. Cost is \$20, plus any books needed. This is a great learning opportunity, right from the comfort of your own home.

For more information check out the school’s web page at: <https://www.lacrosseareasynod.org/synod-school-of-theology>, or contact Pastor Jon.



Feed Our Children Summer Lunch

As, the final thank you letters of the season are placed in the mail, the Feed Our Children Summer Lunch Committee has so much to be thankful for. After a second and third count we served around 957 lunches, provided the BGC with over 860 snack portion servings as they had strict restrictions on food prep as well as 215 bags of groceries. This is in addition to the bags of groceries that were picked up or delivered in the spring.

There were more than 100 volunteers who prepared food, served the vehicles at drive up and delivered meals and groceries to homes. We partnered with volunteers from the Presbyterian Church, Prince of Peace Lutheran, St Leo's Church, Thrivent Financial (thanks to Connie Pinski and Lynette Ender's memberships), the National Honor Society, 1st Community Credit Union and the West Salem Food Service staff.

Donations of food, serving products, and money came from all over the community. What we received from insurance agencies, churches, service organizations, local businesses, and individuals (including an anonymous donation of over \$1,000) almost completely paid for absolutely everything we needed this year. There was even a community individual who sewed masks, sold them, and donated all of the profit. We did use a little of our reserve from last year, but we still end the year in excellent standing in case we need to prepare to serve again earlier than expected. Anything that was left over went to the Food Pantry and BGC, and non-perishables such as sandwich bags were packed up for next year. Nothing was wasted.

On a personal note, I am always humbled by the generosity and support of those at Our Savior's and our West Salem Community for this program, as well as other things that I am a part of. However, this year was extraordinary. This year has been like nothing we have ever seen. There were moments that even seemed somewhat hopeless. Some days were dark, literally and figuratively. As I looked at starting this season (and quite a bit early), I was fearful of how difficult this could be. But then it began ... a food drive which started the grocery bag distribution generated so many items that it took care of that entire service for weeks. Then it was time to start summer planning, again – I wondered “how will we do this, who will still be willing to help during a pandemic?” There were times that I expected businesses, hurt by the shutdown, to not be able to help. Instead, they surpassed the gifts they had previously given, and there was no hesitation in their response to help. In fact, there were times that businesses and individuals came to me with what they could offer before I even had the opportunity to ask. We had more weekly kitchen leaders than any year before. In truth, organizing all of this is not a small task, but the amount of support that so many provide, in so many different ways, makes this a true gift to behold. It is truly incredible and a huge honor to be a part of.

Should the end of this year, or the beginning of the next, present us with the opportunity to serve again, we are ready. Otherwise – we will see all of the children again next summer.

Angie Hemker





A HUGE THANK YOU to Angie Hemker for all of her work coordinating, facilitating, and working this ministry to feed the children and families in our community. Angie spent countless hours making sure the **Feed Our Children** ministry was a huge success in the midst of these challenging days of Covid – from start (*way earlier than planned*) to finish (*are we done yet?*). What a gift she is as she shares her time and talents, as well as her heart and soul with the kids, her community, and her church! Thanks Angie!



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!

Stewardship for All Seasons Update

As I write this, it's raining – God's gift that nurtures all of life! As God's people, we experience gifts of life in many forms, but all of them given so that we can share life with others, making a difference in their lives!



That's what our stewardship ministry is about this year – “always building bridges,” connecting people to God and to each other, and nurturing lives.

Last year's plans couldn't happen the way we wanted, but are happening the way God intended – with new tech enhancements to enable better worship experiences now during Covid, but also in the years to come when we are able to be back in worship together. We're planning for today, with an eye to the future, so that we are “always building bridges!”

For 2021, it's “back to the future.” What we couldn't do during 2020, we'll do next year...

- Maintain our excellent ministries.
- Nurture young people in and out of the congregation to be faithful disciples of Jesus – through enhanced and increased youth ministry.
- Create new connections with young families whose weekends are already packed – by developing a Wednesday worship with an alternate style.

Watch your mail for more information in the coming weeks, and mark your calendar for November 15 – we're planning a creative celebration of the bridges we have built, as we embrace God's call to be “always building bridges.”

In the meantime ... pray! Pray that God direct you in ways of faithful discipleship and stewardship here, in our work together, and in all that you do as a follower of Jesus!



Mission Endowment Fund

Even amidst the uncertainty of the pandemic, the Mission Endowment Fund (MEF) looks to make a difference in the lives of people. Our Savior's MEF uses the earnings from the endowment to support the work of a variety of community and global organizations that seek to meet the needs of people. Last year over \$15,000 was disbursed.

The MEF Committee is **seeking your input for this year's disbursement**. Basic guidelines are available from the office, but in general, most community organizations are eligible. Suggestions are now being received through October 15. Submit your suggestion to the church office, along with your name and contact information for the organization. If you have a good idea, we want to hear about it!

For more information on the MEF, contact Melody Schmitz (chair) or Pastor Jon.

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.





Congregation Council

The Congregation Council met on Monday, September 14, with President Ahles presiding. At this meeting the council:

- Shared in study and prayers based on Psalm 145:15-16.
- Heard electronic giving continues to be strong. Expenses are in line, however the line items with activity may not be as planned due to ministry being different.
- Learned about upcoming fall ministries including: an in-person worship at the Lion's Shelter on October 11, confirmation and Sunday school all on-line until further notice, a gathering for families at Vets Park on September 20, and a successful year for Feed Our Children with the potential of involvement in the fall.
- The stewardship emphasis for 2021 is being developed. Emphasis for 2020 pivoted to focus on technology issues related to continuing worship due to COVID. 2021 will pivot back to an emphasis on ministry excellence, increased youth ministry staffing and a new, alternative Wednesday worship.
- Learned the Tech Team is working on a proposal to upgrade the technology in the sanctuary to allow for a better worship experience now during COVID and for the future.
- Thermostats in the offices will be replaced.
- Learned that a fire pit was purchased for the prayer labyrinth area to be used by the confirmation groups as a way to gather the youth once a month.
- Discussed a potential savings to the Pastors' insurance line item in the budget.
- Heard the re-opening task force will be meeting soon to discuss procedures for whenever the time comes to resume in-person worship/gatherings.

The next meeting of the council will be held Monday, October 12 at 7:00 PM via Zoom. If you would like to know more about the ministry of the council, 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.oursaviorswestsalem.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.

Pastoral Acts:



Baptism – Aria Elsen – September 5
Wedding – Lynae & Kyle Gresens –
September 19
Funeral – Mark Stamstad –
September 5

October Dates for your calendar:



October 4 - Zoom Communion at 10:30 AM

October 7 - Confirmation @ 6 PM

6th grade via Zoom

7th grade outdoor gathering + video posted

8th grade video posted

9th grade CLASS via Zoom

October 11 - Worship at Lion's Shelter

October 14 - Confirmation @ 6 PM

6th grade via Zoom

7th grade CLASS via Zoom

8th grade outdoor gathering

9th grade - Off

October 18 - Zoom Communion at 10:30 AM

October 18 - 2 PM - F3 Event @ Vets Park #4

October 21 - Confirmation @ 6 PM

6th grade via Zoom

7th grade - Off

8th grade CLASS via Zoom

9th grade outdoor gathering

October 25 - Zoom Communion at 10:30 AM

October 28 - Confirmation @ 6 PM

6th grade via Zoom

7th grade - Off

8th grade - Off

9th grade video posted

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

Pastor Jonathan Schmidt, Senior Pastor 612-0217

Email: pastorjon@oursaviorswestsalem.org

Pastor Jean Schmidt, Associate Pastor 612-0217

Email: pastorjean@oursaviorswestsalem.org

Kris Seeger, Administrative Assistant Church Office: 786-0030

Email: office@oursaviorswestsalem.org

Wendy Kane, Interim Director of Youth Ministry 518-9593

Email: youth@oursaviorswestsalem.org

Jill Iliff, Treasurer

Email: treasurer@oursaviorswestsalem.org

Linda Berg, Organist/Choir Accompanist/Director of Music

Email: linda@oursaviorswestsalem.org

Kathy Brisson, Organist

Eric Sorenson, Senior Choir Director

Karen DeSchepper, Financial Secretary

Josh Corning, Custodian

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

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