



# Salem

United Methodist Church  
Forecaster

## A Different Kind of Christmas

but it will still be Christmas

On November 18, our bishop released new pandemic guidance. “In light of worsening Covid-19 positivity rates, the crisis faced by our healthcare systems, and out of an abundance of caution and love for our neighbor, Bishop Laurie Haller and the Appointive Cabinet is directing clergy and churches to cease in-person worship and church activities through January 10, 2021.”

This isn’t a change for Salem, and it doesn’t mean we will begin gathering in-person right after that. We’ll have to see where we are in the pandemic at that point.

But it does mean Christmas, like most everything else, will be different this year. We won’t gather for the Men’s All Church Breakfast or the Ladies’ Christmas Tea. We won’t gather to make homemade blankets for children in need. There won’t be a children’s Christmas Pageant. We won’t go caroling. And we won’t gather in-person to worship and light candles. It hurts to not celebrate Christmas with all our traditions this year.

It may be different, but we will celebrate Christmas, the good news that God tore open the heavens to be with us as one of us in Jesus. Along with our regular weekly Advent

worship services, premiering 9:30 AM Sundays, we will also gather online for two special moments of worship. *(See page 3 for links to our online channels.)*

On Monday, December 21, the Longest Night worship service will premiere at 5 PM. The beginning of winter on December 21 brings the longest night and period of darkness. This year especially, Christmas could be difficult for many. We will gather online in a beautiful moment of worship to light candles and receive comfort in scripture and prayer, bringing Christ’s light to our lives.

Then with the 12 day celebration of Jesus’ birth upon us, on Thursday, December 24, the Christmas Eve worship service will premiere at 5 PM. If you want, have a candle ready to light for both services. As always, the worship videos continue to be available online anytime after they premiere, and if you need or prefer, we will provide you with a DVD of online worship.

Of course, you can celebrate on your own or with family with whom you shelter, too. Read the Christmas story in Luke 2:1-20, sing Christmas carols, light candles, pray, reflect on what it means for God to come down as one of us, and call others to spread the love and light of Christmas.



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\*due to the COVID-19 pandemic Salem continues to offer online worship only

## A Pastoral Letter from Bishop Laurie Regarding Her Worship Directive



Bishop Laurie

Do  
No  
Harm

*As noted on the front page, our bishop has directed us to refrain from in-person worship and church activities through January 10, 2021. Two days later, on November 20, Bishop Laurie offered these words to us:*

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

Grace and peace in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...As you know, COVID-19 infections remain high in Iowa. In Governor Reynolds’ daily briefing yesterday, she mentioned that over the past seven days, there have been 22,000 new COVID cases in the state, with a 17.5% average positivity rate. Reynolds warned, “While we may be cautiously optimistic, we have a whole lot of work to do to bring the numbers down to a level where we can safely manage the virus while getting life back to normal.”

As of this writing, six of our 99 counties are below 15% positivity, 21 counties are between 15% and 20% positivity, and 76 of our counties are over 20% positivity. This is why the White House Coronavirus Task Force, in its November 15 report to Iowa leaders, cautioned that “The spread in Iowa is exponential and unyielding,” as we close in on 200,000 total confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 2,102 deaths in Iowa.

In light of the continuing COVID crisis in Iowa, which is maxing out our hospitals and putting at great risk our health workers as well as the elderly and the vulnerable, people of faith are called to respond. In a press release on Wednesday, I directed clergy and congregations to refrain from in-person indoor worship and church activities through and including January 10, 2021. This allows ample time for any families who are traveling for the holidays to quarantine before gathering in person in their churches. We do this to preserve life and the well being of our health care system and our frontline workers, who are being stretched to the limit.

Advent is coming, and our churches are now adjusting plans and preparing for

outdoor and drive-through events so that people may still have a vital Christmas experience. Thank you for the many ways in which you are creatively adjusting to this new reality and are sharing the love of Jesus.

Many of us have dearly missed being physically present with our friends. I love singing Christmas carols and spending time with the children, talking about the birth of Jesus. However, by refraining from in-person worship at this time, we are being true to our call as people of faith to do no harm, do good, and stay in love with God. Our faith gives us support and encouragement but also reminds us of our responsibility to ensure that all people are safe, especially the most vulnerable among us.

Many in our state, country, and around the world are experiencing what has been called COVID fatigue. We are tired, we are weary, and we are anxious. We miss worshipping in our church buildings, and we miss being with family and friends. If you are feeling overwhelmed, please reach out to your pastor, a neighbor, or a friend. And be on the lookout yourself for ways in which you can care for others. The apostle Paul reminds us of our call and responsibility for such a time as this, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” (Galatians 6:2)

Please know that all of our district superintendents and conference staff will be available to you to help with support. We are collecting Advent and Christmas resources on the Iowa Conference Website for online worship and tech support. We will get through this together.

As we continue to track the trends of COVID-19 infections, we will watch for positivity rates to decline below 15%. Like you, we want to gather again for in person worship and activities and will continue to keep you updated.

Blessings,

Bishop Laurie and the Appointive Cabinet

## December Worship Series — *Waiting...*

In December we enter the season of Advent and Christmas. In many ways this year 2020 has been a “terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day,” as the children’s book about Alexander describes. In the midst of this, we’re waiting. We’re waiting for increasingly terrible pandemic to be over. We’re waiting to celebrate Jesus’ birth come Christmas, but we’re waiting for Jesus to come again and put the world to rights. We’re waiting for God’s peace, wholeness, completeness, health, well-being, joy, beauty, justice, friendship, and salvation. We’re waiting. That’s what Advent is all about. “The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him” (*Lamentations 3:25*).

Worship continues to be offered online only in the midst of the pandemic. Our online worship, available on demand anytime during the week, premieres live at 9:30 AM on Sunday mornings on Facebook, YouTube, and our website. The links are [www.facebook.com/salem.cr](http://www.facebook.com/salem.cr), [www.salemchurch.life](http://www.salemchurch.life), and <http://youtube.com/channel/UcNwQ4K2wc3F0nmk8h9y8Xjw>. Please subscribe to our YouTube channel so we can get an easier link (we need 100). Click on the YouTube link above and hit the red SUBSCRIBE button next to our name. (If you don’t already have a YouTube account, you will need to create one.)

Please let us know if you have any questions, and if you need or prefer, we will provide you with a DVD of online worship or a paper copy of the sermon and prayers.

You’re invited to our parking lot for Drive-Thru Holy Communion on December 6, from 11-11:30 AM. This is about an hour after the “live” worship video ends.

Dec 6 Second Sunday of Advent (*online premiere at 9:30 AM*)  
Mark 1:1–8 The Proclamation of John the Baptist  
Drive-Thru Holy Communion 11-11:30 AM

Dec 13 Third Sunday of Advent (*online premiere at 9:30 AM*)  
Psalm 126 The LORD Has Done Great Things

Dec 20 Fourth Sunday of Advent (*online premiere at 9:30 AM*)  
Luke 1:26–38 The Birth of Jesus Foretold  
Holy Communion Live Online after 10 AM (*following the worship premiere*)

Dec 21 Longest Night Service of Hope and Healing (*online premiere at 5 PM*)  
Psalm 13 How Long Must I Bear Pain and Sorrow?  
John 1:1-14 The Word Became Flesh

Dec 24 Christmas Eve Worship (*online premiere at 5 PM*)  
Isaiah 9:2-7 The Righteous Reign of the Coming King  
Psalm 96 Ascribe to the LORD Glory  
Titus 2:11-14 The Grace of God Has Appeared  
Luke 2:1-20 The Birth of Jesus and the Angels and Shepherds

Dec 27 First Sunday after Christmas (*online premiere at 9:30 AM*)  
Luke 2:21–40 Jesus Is Named and Presented in the Temple

**Come and Worship!**

***Sundays***

*9:30 AM—Online*

Dec. 6 Drive-Thru Holy Communion 11-11:30 AM  
come to the parking lot  
and we’ll guide you  
through



## December Birthdays and Anniversaries

### Birthdays:

- 1 Sharon Lindo Steele
- 2 Ginnie Clark
- 3 Saffie Kamara
- 5 Emory Fayram
- 7 Cathy Halsted
- 8 Dixie Burg
- 9 Holly Mara
- 9 Gary Briesemeister
- 12 Kathy Miller
- 13 Lee Borntrager
- 13 Cindy MacLeod
- 13 Nicole Knapp
- 13 Linden Hague
- 16 Shari Kendall
- 19 Susan Lillard
- 20 Sandy Minger
- 25 Grace Thompson
- 25 Francis Halsted
- 25 Greg Johnson
- 26 Marlene Primrose



- 26 Julie Lefebure
- 27 Max Stransky
- 28 Barb Walker
- 28 Jeff Gipple
- 29 Larry Vondracek
- 29 Courtney Templeton
- 30 Robin Brophy

### Anniversaries:

- 26 Tim & Linda Nolan
- 29 Ron & Sandy Andreasen
- 30 LeRoy & Becky Bierwirth

## In Gratitude



Thank you for the prayers, calls, messages, and cards I've received for my recent back surgery. You all are a blessing to me and no doubt your prayers have made my recovery very successful! God bless you!

Deb Black

## Connecting with One Another

As we continue our physical distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we have persons in the church intentionally making phone calls to connect with church members. Of course, even more people are doing that simply on their own because that's who we are as the church! If you need any help or support, you are welcome to contact the church at (319) 362-6178 or [office@salemchurchcr.com](mailto:office@salemchurchcr.com) or contact Pastor John directly at (319) 538-5145 or [johnlouk@salemchurchcr.com](mailto:johnlouk@salemchurchcr.com). Additionally, our Staff would be delighted to connect with you. Go to [www.salemchurch.life/staff](http://www.salemchurch.life/staff) and send an email to the person with whom you'd like to connect. Physical (social) distancing doesn't have to mean social loneliness.

## Finance Update

Salem Finance Update as of October 31, 2020	
<b>Operating Income (Annual Giving):</b>	
Offering Income	\$260,536
PPP Income	28,943
Total Operating Income	\$289,479
Budgeted Income to date	254,996
Amount Actual over/(under) Budget	34,483
<b>Operating Expenses</b>	
Expenses to date	\$232,073
Budgeted Expenses to date	253,769
Amount Actual over/(under) Budget	(21,696)
Net Amount of Actual Income over Actual Expenses	<b>\$ 57,407</b>
<b>Building Fund</b>	
Offering Income	\$59,324
PPP Income	6,057
Interest Income	25
2020 Mortgage payments	71,907
Net Amount Income over/(under) Expenses	<b>(6,501)</b>
Building Fund Balance held in Reserve (5.2months)	\$36,645

## 4 Ways to Give at Salem



There are four ways to give your offering •mail an offering to the church office •give electronically at our website [salemchurchcr.com/donate](http://salemchurchcr.com/donate) •use the mobile app Give+ •send a text to (855) 917-1810 with the dollar sign and the amount you are giving (e.g. \$25) and the text code, if applicable (e.g. \$25 BOOKS). Need help? Go to [salemchurch.life](http://salemchurch.life).



## Mission Focus: Change a Child's Story

Joni Salazar

Our congregation is helping "Change a Child's Story." We are accepting monetary donations to buy books for students in need.

"You're never too young for books. Reading to babies as young as six months of age leads to stronger vocabularies and better early literacy skills four years later, just as the children are getting ready to go to school." Only 53 percent of children ages three to five were read to daily by a family member. Children in families with incomes below the poverty line are less likely to be read to aloud everyday than are children in families with incomes at or above poverty. It all starts by giving a book as a gift to a child. A child can learn from a book read to them or by them reading a book to their family.

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus who transform the world. We can transform the world when we help a child read a book. During this time of



quarantine, read a book to a child, grandchild or friend on FaceTime or Zoom or video. It makes a huge difference in their life.

Will you help us Change a Child's Story this year? Your involvement can make all the difference in a child's future. If you have books to donate, or have any questions, contact Joni Salazar at (319) 573-3943 or [kenwvol@crschools.us](mailto:kenwvol@crschools.us) and she'll pick them up. If giving by text, code is BOOKS.

## Outreach Team

### Project Linus



"Providing Security Through Blankets"

In December, Salem and the Outreach Team typically host the Project Linus event, a community mission project to make blankets for underprivileged or seriously ill children in our area. Even though Salem won't be able to host the Project Linus event this year due to COVID-19, you can still help by donating fleece tie blankets or materials. Here are the details:

- Fleece:
  - \* two pieces, each measuring a minimum of two and a half yards, one solid color and one matching pattern piece
  - \* must be smoke-free, food-free, pet-free, and please don't put them into scented garbage bags
- If making fleece tie blankets:
  - \* must have two knots in each tie
  - \* completed blankets must be delivered to Crystal Ellis before Saturday, Dec. 19

For more information, you can email Crystal Ellis at: [crysellis@aol.com](mailto:crysellis@aol.com) or join the "Project Linus: Cedar Rapids - Iowa City - Waterloo Chapter" Facebook group!

## Report of the Leadership Board

11-17-2020

Due to social distancing restrictions with the COVID-19 pandemic, the Salem Leadership Board met off site via Zoom. The monthly Board meeting opened with prayer at 5:35 PM. Those attending the virtual meeting were Troy Bergmann, Donna Sanders, Brian Schooley, Amy Schilling, Don Kamara, Dave Davis, Jeremy Hague, Billie Shaffer, Linda Curson, and Pastor John Louk.

**Stewardship** - Linda Curson presented a summary of Salem's finances which continue to hold steady. As of October, Salem was approximately \$32,000 over expenses. There will be some extra expenses in November as the church pays off work completed for cleaning up and repairing damage from the derecho. In addition to the general fund, the building fund currently has approximately 5.2 months in reserve income. Linda recently attended a webinar by Vanco, the company that processes our online payments, and presented additions to their platform that we may be able to utilize in the future, including the ability to make reservations in their app. Guidance regarding the PPP Loan was finally established and paperwork was completed, signed, and submitted. The entirety of Salem's PPP Loan of \$35,000 will be forgiven. At the suggestion of the Iowa Conference, paperwork was filed to help protect Salem against class action lawsuits from the Boy Scouts of America filing for bankruptcy.

**Trustees** - A summary of derecho mitigation and restoration was presented, including: tree damage (stump grinding) work finished week of October 12. Remaining treeline (west end alongside field) to be addressed in spring, main building exterior repair work finished except for shingle replacement (to be done soon), mold inspection still to be scheduled, interior work can commence once finished (sanctuary ceiling, ceiling tile replacement, carpet shampooing), lower level damages are minor – need to ask for a team to assist (replacement of trim and carpet cleaning), along with battery back-up sump installation. Additionally, work continues to prepare for the demolition and removal of the west outbuilding. Most items have been moved to the east building with the exception of some additional furniture and stained glass windows that will be moved in the near future. The Board will also continue to talk about the long term plan of furniture pieces currently being stored.

### Thank You to Leaders

We want to say thank you to those Leadership Board members who are concluding their term of service at the end of 2020. Thank you to Troy Bergmann (chairperson), Dave Clark, Dave Davis, Don Kamara, Billie Shaffer, and Brian Schooley for your service! We are deeply grateful for their gifts, time, and leadership. They have served faithfully and well. While none of our leaders serve in order to be recognized, perhaps a simple "thank you" from each of us for all they have done would be meaningful.

**SPRC** - The Board received a couple of resignations recently. Scott Shaffer, who was working as the custodian has resigned. The Board thanks Scott for all his work while holding this position, as well as additional work he did helping the Trustees with various projects. Dave Clark who has been serving on the Leadership Board has decided to step down from the Board effective immediately. The Board appreciates Dave's commitment to Salem and for serving the past two years.

**Additional Discussion** - The Board spent a short time discussing the continued closure. Bishop Laurie Haller recently sent a message to all conference churches strongly urging them to avoid in person worship as the pandemic worsened in our area. Additional safety measures are being taken by staff and recording of weekly services will now be done separately so people are not in the same area to avoid exposure. The Board did discuss the success of the drive-thru communion and an additional drive-thru communion will be held on December 6, 2020 at 11 AM. In conjunction with staff, the Board has developed an outreach plan to contact the congregation to check in and engage in fellowship. Amy Shilling has completed a list for Board and Staff to reach out and contact and work in reaching out will continue.

Meeting closed with prayer at 6:55 PM.





## December 2020 Forecaster

3715 33rd Avenue SW  
Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52404

(319) 362-6178  
office@salemchurchcr.com  
www.salemchurchcr.com  
www.facebook.com/salem.cr  
salemchurch.life

**RETURN SERVICE  
REQUESTED**

**Salem's mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.**  
**"connecting people, building community, transforming lives through Jesus"**

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## Salem's Sunday Morning Schedule (Online Worship Only)

9:30 AM                      Online Worship  
www.facebook.com/salem.cr  
www.salemchurch.life  
www.salemchurchcr.com

Church Office closed in December

