

Salem United Methodist Church

February 2021 Newsletter

«187 Years and Still Loving, Serving and Celebrating»



SALEM Methodist Protestant Church 1833



SALEM United Methodist Church 2021

12 High Street, Brookeville, Maryland 20833

Whoever you are, wherever you are on life's journey, you are welcome here

TO THE SALEM UM CHURCH COMMUNITY



Rev. Emily and Chris Hart, along with their 4-legged babies. Teddy and Misha

Church, we have been separated for a long time. It's almost a full year of the pandemic. 2020 didn't stay in its little bubble and seems to insist on creeping out into 2021. I'm excited about vaccines. I'm excited about the light at the end of the tunnel. And still, I'm getting tired of this. It's hard to plan for Ash Wednesday, Lent, Easter, and even the summer knowing that "normal" won't arrive until

closer to the fall. I'm getting antsy and a little frustrated. I have ideas for things we can do as a church, ways I can meet more of you and spend more time with people, yet most of those will have to wait. And so, church, what are we to do?

Well, we're a church. What are we called to do? How do Christians respond to collectively hard times?

One of the best things we can do is simply pay attention. Before you check out, no, I don't mean to watch the news more often! I mean to start paying attention to the world around us. The weather, nature, the people, our families, art. The next time the stress of the pandemic, isolation, medical challenges, family tension, financial stress starts to rise in you, I challenge you to take a breath, look around, and find something God made. It would be easy to casually glance around saying, "well, God made

everything.” My challenge is for you to be deeply specific.

“God made *that* leaf.”

“God made *that* human (even if it’s an annoying human!)”

“God made *that* rock.”

“God made *that* cheeseburger (through some instrumental people, anyway!)”

Then look deeper.

God put the veins in the leaf that help water to travel to its tips to keep in green in the summer and let it dry up and fall in the winter.

God has guided and shaped that human since before their birth. Perhaps they know God’s abundant love. Perhaps they aren’t even sure they like themselves, let alone that the God of the universe cares for them.

That rock was perhaps created through years and years of pressure and heat compounding materials into what you see before you. Or, perhaps, it’s simply broken off from the road or buildings around you. Where have its components been? What had to happen for it to be in your line of sight right now?

What love, that God would build systems that evolve into such a yummy dinner. Plants in soil that lead to food for cattle. Then milk to form cheese. Then cows, slaughtered for meat. Then butchers, skilled to spice and grind meat into the best patty. Chefs and bakers to cook the patties and bake the buns. Suddenly, the entire ecosystem ends up on your plate. What a creative God!

This kind of paying attention won’t solve the problem of the pandemic. It won’t make us suddenly happy, healthy, and rich. But that’s not what we’re trying to do. This kind of paying attention is to

help us re-center God in our lives. Let it be slow and meditative. Let it distract you from your immediate annoyance and delve into the ecosystems-the *Godsystems*- around you. Trace the objects around you back to God. If you can’t find a connection to God? *Well*, then you can start a decluttering project instead!

The Good News? You are not alone. I am with you. Salem is with you. Most importantly, God is with you. In my youth group growing up, we always closed with the same thing:

“The Lord watch between me and thee, while we are absent one from another.”

It’s still the best blessing I know. May God be with you.

Rev. Emily Hart

ASH WEDNESDAY ASHES AND SERVICE

As we begin the season of lent, we will gather virtually to recognize the ways God puts us back together-no matter the circumstances. February 17th at 7:30 P.M. we will join with St. Paul’s UMC in Laytonsville for a virtual service on SalemUMC.live and Zoom. The zoom details will be available on our website and by email soon. We will also be doing “self imposition” of ashes. To be ready for that you are welcome to pick up ashes from the ramp behind the church on Tuesday, February 16 from 4:00–6:30 P.M. or Wednesday, February 17 from 2:00–4:00 P.M. Rev. Emily will be available to pray with you as you come pick up. If you’d like to participate but can’t get to the church, you can use ashes from a fireplace, dirt from your garden, or anything else that creatively helps you to

connect with God's creation. (If you use your own ashes, feel free to wet them with an oil of some kind. It helps them to stick. However, DO NOT use water which can cause a chemical reaction that can burn you!)

Let us join together to repent and renew our relationships with God.

SOMETHING IS HAPPENING AT SALEM



The Community Hall is getting a fresh coat of paint! With the Hall not being used, it is the perfect time for some TLC. Team Sparkle is working hard and will have all ready by Spring.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR MUSIC DIRECTOR

As most of you know, Dr. Harry Dunstan will be leaving us. His last day is February 28th. He and Kay will be moving to Iowa to take care of the Family business. Below is his message, in part to me, as I requested an article.

“We have been busy day and night getting (personal things ready for us) in Iowa, closing my mother-in-law's estate, all other things (and dealing with things on the farm), oh yeah, packing. It is a daily chore; all other stuff will be easy.

I am so sorry that I never really got to know everyone at Salem, and I never really got started. When I took the position of Music Director last January, I had such high hopes, and firm intentions, of starting a Spirituality & The Arts Series, poetry readings, community concerts, and many other projects involving spirituality and the arts. The pandemic prevented all of that. Kay and I are bringing our best efforts however to Northwest Iowa, a profoundly underserved community, and just today we received a wildly enthusiastic note from the Superintendent of the school system welcoming us! Our new home, Marcus, Iowa turns 150 this year and Kay and I kick off the celebration with a Fourth of July concert in Marcus! It is a strong faith-based community, and the question is always not “Do you have a church home?” but “Where is your church home?” We are already being warmly welcomed as Kay's parents were pillars of the community and Marcus put Kay in the city's Hall of Fame in 2018!

I've decided the best thing for me to do is to make a short video in mid-February saying goodbye to everyone and Rev. Emily can post it. In the meantime, I think it would be nice to share an essay that Kay wrote for her congregation telling them what she has done during the pandemic. This is the vibration and community I am stepping into. I feel as if I could have written that essay myself, as it speaks to many of my childhood experiences. Please feel free to print it in the newsletter.

All good things,
Harry N. Dunstan, Ph.D.”

HOW CAN I KEEP FROM SINGING?

By: Kay Dunstan

Or, what I've been doing during the pandemic....

There has never been a time in my life when the Divine has not been the core of my existence. I was born in a remote corner of northwest Iowa and lived with my family on our large farm until going away to college. Those early years have never left me, and I have always remained a “farm girl,” something of which I am very proud. Those early years instilled in me a great, existential sense of the sacred. The Divine was not an ultimate reality: it was and remains the only reality. My diurnal existence was literally framed between the large tin barn on our farm and Trinity Lutheran Church, just a mile away. Even today, there is nothing but open field and sky between the farm and the church. As a child working in those fields beside my father and neighbors, the visible landmarks, the defining structures of my childhood were the farm buildings and our church. In many respects our lives were like those of our brethren, the ancient Hebrews, whose lives were shaped by the seasons of the harvests and the idea of God’s always-present temple. Our community always honored the Sabbath and, as an adult, I have learned how to also honor the Sabbath as “a temple in time.”

Living under a never-ending open sky, full of light that no artist or machine can ever fully capture and walking in open fields of the greenest of greens, the most golden of golds, of browns and reds, purples and sage, every moment of my life in that Garden sang, “How great thou art!” Indeed, ***how could I keep from singing?!***

And because Mother/Father Creating God was a reality there, I knew that I lived in the very creating word and breath of God: that was a biological reality for me. The lessons I learned in Sunday School and from my community taught me about the life and love of Jesus. The stories of Jesus taught me how God’s love can be fully realized in us through his example. The abiding, constant acts of kindness and compassion in my small farm community formed my idea of Christian community. My concept of the Divine was formed for me by the ever-present God of Nature, of Light, of beautiful creation, and of a loving Jesus, who put that beauty into a human language of love and compassion.

Our “temple” was Trinity Lutheran Church. To this day, the principal landmarks in my “neck of the woods” are the church and my father’s large tin barn, each prominently occupying a substantial corner of a section. Trinity Church is truly a tabernacle. The land on which it was built, well over 100 years ago, was donated by a local family and every member of the church participated in its building process, brick by brick. It is a structure meant to stand, despite the ferocity of wind and hostile weather, and it has. One of the earliest photos of my father, Chuck, is of him as an infant in a horse-drawn buckboard wagon in front of the newly constructed church. He remained a faithful steward of that church his entire life.

My mother served as well. Until her death in January 2020, my mother, Lois, still taught Sunday School. Trained as a schoolteacher, she is still revered by students she taught in public school 70 years ago! As for me, I became a “living

legacy” in her other vocation, music. The day I was brought home from the hospital another new member of the family also arrived...I don't think it was by accident that my mother's new piano arrived along with me. That piano later had a room constructed just for it and the “Music Room” still has a place of prominence in the farmhouse. My mother also served God as a church organist for over 70 years, and, for the overwhelming majority of that time, she was an unpaid volunteer. Following in her musical footsteps, I began playing services at the age of 11. During my adolescence, after I had completed my farm chores, I would ride my horse a mile down the gravel road, tether him to the hitching post, and practice the organ in the church. Those happy times with “Sparky” give me a unique understanding of that great hymn of the church, “Draw Me in the Spirit's Tether”.

For a long time, I believed I would become a veterinarian. Growing up on the farm, I was constantly surrounded by not just our farm animals (pigs, hogs, cattle, chickens), but by the abundance of wildlife in our 20-acre grove, and the ever-present domestic dogs and cats. Both of my parents loved animals and there were never “strays” who found their way onto the farm, but new adoptees who were always embraced as new members of the family. It was the “music” of that farm, however that caused me to realize my real calling was to be a musician, and more specifically, a singer. My family always sang! Moreover, my community always has, and forever will sing! As Karen Armstrong says again and again, “Music is not metaphor, *it is pure meaning!*” I

have always been moved by Leonard Bernstein's notion that since in our Judeo-Christian tradition we believe that *all creation was verbal* (“and God said. . . .”) Bernstein insists that when God said, “Let there be light,” God must have **sung** that into existence. We know that in ancient times the Hebrew Bible, because it was the word of God, had to be sung, not recited. Modern string theory now tells us that indeed we are all creations of light and vibration, in other words, heavenly music of our God. *How can I keep from singing?!*

I also feel blessed to have grown up in a faith tradition that, above all, sings! When Martin Luther ripped down the “Veil of the Temple” and moved the Christian faith into a shared participation of clergy and congregation, it was only through music that he was successful. By conflating popular tunes with sacred liturgy, Luther caused all of Western Europe, and consequently the world, to more fully have a God experience through embodied listening and participation in the liturgy. And, of course, then there's J.S. Bach. Recognized by all, starting with Mozart, as the greatest musician who ever lived, Bach is the true father of all Protestant hymnody and the touchstone of all serious musical study in the Western tradition. My childhood was immersed in the great hymns of the church and the music of J.S. Bach, who, incidentally, said every note written by him was in service to God.

All of these blessings inform who I am. This “Music” is a part of me, and I am a part of this “Music.” My early years taught me how to listen to the very still, still, voice of God, who is always

speaking, especially in the silence. I don't understand how a sentient person could stand in an open Iowan field, under the most beautiful of skies, and not be drawn into "the Spirit's tether". As Wallace Stevens said, "God and the imagination are one". My community taught me how "the music of humankind" is the song that binds us together and I will return to this later.

As I mentioned before, I am very proud to be a farm kid. One of my proudest moments was two years ago when my hometown of Marcus, Iowa inducted me into its Hall of Fame for my contributions to society through music and education. I have always felt honored that my singing, in some small way, has supported charities and beneficent agencies ranging from the Whitman Walker Clinic, to Children's Hospital, The Mid-Atlantic Innocence Project, The American Red Cross, The Montgomery County Coalition for the Homeless, Josh's Ride, *et al*, *Blessed be the tie that binds* and for me that tie has been music! As a farm child, I have always taken secret delight in thinking that I share special experiences with Jesus, something unique to us. The author Paula Fredricksen, an expert on Galilee and the Temple in Jerusalem, always casts Jesus as a farm kid. She writes that as a boy and later an adult, whenever he visited the temple in Jerusalem what would have been very comforting to him would have been the sights and sounds of the sacrificial animals and the process of worship during the Jewish high holy days: the sounds of the doves and the lambs, and the reassuring fragrances of hay, straw, meat on a charcoal grille, and yes, even manure.

My friend Brandon Scott, an expert on the parabolic language of Jesus, also tells us that his language must be understood in its rural, "farm" context and it is always quite distinct from the highly urban language of Paul. I have always relished the notion that these experiences are also a part of my childhood and adolescence.

As I move forward to my life during the COVID-19 pandemic, I am most grateful to these experiences as they have been the guiding lights through what could have been dark times. The pandemic hit the work and efforts of me and my husband, Dr. Harry Dunstan, especially hard. Above all, we are singers and teachers, and music is how we best communicate and build ties that bind. Beginning in mid-March everything we do was shut down. There was no more public performing, public lecturing, private teaching, singing for Life's most important events (weddings, religious services of any kind, funerals, memorials)—nothing! As career church musicians (between us we have about 100 years of experience), we were able to continue to serve through Zoom services. That brought new challenges as we were suddenly called upon to step out of our purview and spend long hours learning new technologies and securing copyright releases and permissions. It was all worth it, as we were able to keep our services running uninterruptedly.

We also used this sheltering time to further develop our musical crafts and to that end I have had daily voice lessons with my husband and have spent hours each day in devotional study and reading. We have turned this time into something of a sabbatical, without the compensation.

But most importantly, I have used this time to draw upon the experiences of my youth and faith journey to minister to our students who are suffering during this pandemic. Sadly, we have students (some in their early 20's) who are undergoing major cancer treatments—horrific autoimmune disorders that are baffling the experts at Johns Hopkins—others have major psychological disorders requiring hospitalization and suicide watch, and still others have debilitating illnesses. Those that have remained with us during this time, in essence, need to sing for their sanity and salubrity. We have cooked meals and delivered them, counseled the frightened, the lonely, and the disheartened, given prayers and prayer shawls, and above all, made sure that music—**singing!**—remained a vital part of their daily life, as well as their treatment and recovery. We know that the community of music will go where language fails and speak when there are no words. *How I can keep from Singing?!*

I am grateful that this pandemic has provided me with an opportunity to expand and apply my music ministry in new and unexpected ways. That said, I very much look forward to the time when we can all join hands together and sing our joyful song! Psalm 107:2 tells us to “Let the redeemed of the Lord tell their story!” Amen and amen!

FROM THE CONGREGATION

“Sharing My Thoughts with You”

By: Charlyne Lewis

February, as we all are aware, is the “LOVE” month. We can express and show our LOVE in numerous ways during

this fun month! Valentines, special gifts to that ‘special someone’ in our lives, all kinds of neat things to be happy about. Do you remember as a child – ‘way back when’ – giving and receiving those cute penny Valentines? – and what about those little heart-shaped candies with cute ‘sayings’ on each one (which are still around today) - I always LOVED that period in my life as a child, didn't you folks?

Well, our Heavenly Father has also given to each of us His abiding LOVE which is mentioned often in His Holy Word. We are so blessed to know that we can go to Him anytime and receive from Him an abundance of LOVE overflowing to us every day, and not just at ‘special’ times of the year.

God Bless!!

1 Corinthians 1-13 (the LOVE chapter)

CONGRATULATIONS!



To Emily (Weinberger) and Kyle Johns on the birth of their son, Duke Joseph, on January 9th 2021.

Congratulations also to the proud grandparents, Ginny and Pete Weinberger,

great-grandmother Virginia Smith and his three proud uncles, who survived the special event with great big smiles.

BIRTHDAYS AND ANNIVERSARIES

If your name should be on one of these lists, please contact velma_durant@yahoo.com. We don't want to leave you out. Thank you.

Our February Birthdays are:

Gregg, Eddie	02/02
Whaley, Janet	02/07
Roberts, John	02/08
Wahl, Jerry	02/08
Roberts, Austin	02/15
Lyon, Anna	02/17
Rhinehart, Roger	02/24
Wilkie, Nancy Joie	02/27

There are no Anniversaries in February.

OUR COMMUNITY

Eye-glass Collection: Salem continues to collect used eyeglasses, cell phones and hearing aids to donate to Lions Club. Please leave them in Salem Community Hall.

“FOR I WAS HUNGRY...”

Olney Help, our local food pantry, is always in need of contributions. Due to COVID they are not collecting food items. You may send gift cards and financial donations to:

Olney Help
P.O. Box 430
Olney, MD 20830-0430
Telephone No. (301) 774-4334

“Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee. ...”

“For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.” (2 Tim. 1:6-7.)

PRAYER SHAWLS



Prayer Shawls are available in the Salem entry hall on top of the coat rack. There is no cost. If you know anyone you want to share a prayer with all the time, please help yourself to a shawl. The comfort they give is well worth the effort of delivering one to your friends, family, or co-workers. They do help. Just knowing someone cares is sometimes just the right medicine. They will thank you!

CONTACT INFORMATION

Reverend Emily Hart takes a Sabbath day on Friday for rest and renewal! She also honors time with her husband and dogs in the evening. Please contact her on Friday and after 8:30 P.M. only in an emergency (or a scheduled meeting!).

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**The Salem Newsletter is assembled and published by
Velma Durant, and edited by Rev. Emily Hart**

SCROLL DOWN for information about Lent Worship at Salem UMC

Lent Worship at Salem UMC

This year for Lent (and Easter!), let's pay attention. For Lent I will be reading "Lent in Plain Sight: A Devotion through Ten Objects" by Jill Duffield (available on Amazon). Please, join me. Each Sunday, I'll preach on the topic for the week. If you need help purchasing the book, reach out to Suzanne Friis.

If you are feeling a bit disconnected from the church, or from the world, this is a devotion for you. It deeply connects scripture and the ten objects Jesus likely encountered in his last few weeks before his death. You likely have each of the objects in or around your home right now: bread, cross, coins, shoes, oil, coats, towels, thorns, and stones. Do any of these resonate with you? Do you have stories about certain shoes you've worn? Or certain pesky thorn bushes? Send in a picture and a story and we may feature it on our Facebook or in our next newsletter!

Here's our schedule up-to Holy Week. The rest will be in the March Newsletter!

Worship Date	Object	Scripture	Weekly Reflection Question
21-Feb-2021	Bread	Matthew 6: 5-15	God used food as an expression of God's deepest love and most important sacrifice. In our world where carbs are almost considered dangerous, how do you see God's love in food?
28-Feb-2021	Cross	Mark 8: 31-38	The cross was initially seen as a symbol of torture. Now, we see it as a symbol of deep love. Before the crucifixion, Jesus called people to "take up their cross" to follow him. How do you think they heard that? What does it mean to you now?
07-Mar-2021	Coins	Mark 12: 13-17	Ah, money. How do you decide what belongs to God? What does it mean to give something to God?
14-Mar-2021	Shoes	Exodus 3: 1-6	When do you take your shoes off? Why then/there? What does it mean?
21-Mar-2021	Oil	Psalms 23; Matthew 25: 1-13	Oil can be a symbol of abundance, extravagance, or decadence. Now, we're unlikely to pour oil over our heads in celebration (just call Neutrogena now!). How do you celebrate God's goodness in your life?