

December 2021

Light of the World



I've always found comfort in the dark. One of my earliest memories as a toddler was of my parents putting some cute animal stickers on my bedroom wall. They were fun that first day; I enjoyed them very much... until the sun went down. Then I found out they glowed in the dark. I couldn't sleep. I kept looking back at them as they looked at me. My parents had to take them down that night so I could drift off.

It was not so much that they were animals looking at me in the middle of the night; it was because my attention was—and always has been—drawn to lights in the darkness. And that's not a bad thing, except for folks like me who find that distracting for sleep.

But in times of darkness in our lives—times of spiritual and emotional darkness as opposed to physical darkness—a light becomes a point of focus for hope in the midst of hopelessness, a source of warmth in the cold, and a way of find our bearing in the rolling seas of nighttime despair.

Years ago as a youth minister at a large suburban church, I would take 60 youth and adults for a weekend canoe trip in the wilderness right as school began. It was a time of anxiety and excitement for the kids as the uncertainty of a new school year began, and the trip was a great opportunity to have fun and unwind in a fun environment away from “the real world.”

One of the highlights each year was our Saturday night campfire. We'd finished a 15-mile canoe trip and were tired, happy and hungry. The evening began before sundown, when some of our Boy Scout youth would build a big fire. Some parents would bring food down to the fire ring, and I would bring my guitar. We'd play a couple fun group-building games, then cook hotdogs and marshmallows over the fire in the waning light. And then in the darkness I'd take out my guitar, and sometimes a few youth would, too, and we'd begin singing praise tunes that they knew as we gathered in the light and warmth of that fire. There in the dark, we worshipped God.

Don't miss the symbolism here: a glowing fire in the center of us all, warming all in its presence, giving flickering, orange light that captured our attention in a calming, hypnotic glow as we sang praise to our God. And outside that ring was darkness, cold, and—symbolically—the “animals” of evil and anxiety and discomfort of the world, and the uncertainty of the new school year.

This Advent season, let us think of Jesus as the campfire—the light—a warm beacon of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love in the darkness of the past, in the unknowns of the future. We do know one future of Advent: Christ the Child, Clearer of the Temple, Prince of Peace, and Lover of our Souls will be born in us once again in us. This is the cycle of our faith, one of birth, growth, death, and resurrection. Unlike those disconcerting animals in the dark, this is a light that draws us in, warms us up, and gives us a future and a hope. This is Jesus: Light of the World. Merry Christmas, ya'll.

Warming in the Light,
Pastor Russ

Moderator Moments

This time last year, I agreed to step up and be Salem’s Moderator – for a period of one year. My motivation to take this role was two-fold.

As I shared with Council last year, virtually no one Nominating Committee approached (and we approached many) was willing to take on the role. Responses ranged from “No,” to “Hell, no.” When we explored the reasons for all the no’s, we heard frustration with a Council that had become closed and dysfunctional, with decision-making and power held tightly by one or two members. There was a sense that new leadership might not be welcomed by the “establishment” members. So – I volunteered to be “Moderator for a year,” as the nominating committee actively recruited and was able to bring three additional new members to Council. At the time, Salem retained six council members – some of whom had been on Council far beyond the term-limits outlined in Salem’s bylaws.

My second – and more important – motivation to take on this role was my belief that Salem was poised to move in exciting, expansive, new directions under the leadership of Pastor Russ Kirby. In Pastor Russ, I saw strong spiritual leadership, high energy, optimism, engagement, creativity, and a drive to move Salem to be a strong church and a positive, welcoming presence in our community. I was stepping up to support Pastor Russ and help move Salem in these new directions.

Salem did make some progress with Pastor Russ’s leadership. However, that progress was hindered by the divisive actions of two or three individuals who worked relentlessly to undermine Pastor Russ’s ministry, to attack his integrity, to foster disrespect of him, and to derail any efforts to move Salem forward. We

all know that with Pastor Russ’s resignation, they succeeded, at least for the time-being.

My year as Moderator is drawing to a close. With just one more remaining scheduled meeting for Council in 2021, I’m transitioning the role to our Vice Moderator, Deborah Barnard. I’ll be available to Deborah for any support she may need and am confident that she’ll provide the strong leadership that I no longer feel I can offer to Council.

I am hopeful that in the coming year, new leadership will step up at Salem and take the church in exciting directions.

Moderator

Michael Stice

Notification of Congregational Meeting

December 12, 2021, at 10:30 am

A special meeting of Salem’s Council has been called to discuss a possible change in our church leadership structure. An anticipated outcome of this meeting may include issues that will require a congregational vote. Because of this, I am calling for a Congregational meeting for Salem Members on Sunday, December 12, following the worship service, at approximately 10:30 AM. Depending upon any new Covid restrictions, members may participate either in-person in the sanctuary, or by Zoom.

Salem UCC Council Moderator

Michael Stice

Christian Education

The December Sunday School Family Resource Packet will be available at the Hanging of the Greens on, November 27, and on the first Sunday of Advent, November 28. It contains Christian education resources that can be used throughout the Advent and Christmas seasons by families. Everyone is invited to pick one up to use, or to share.

We are preparing for our Sunday School youth to participate in the worship service on December 19. This will provide opportunities for youth to read scriptures and prayers and sing Christmas songs with the congregation as we celebrate the coming birth of the Christ Child.

We also invite our youth to draw a picture depicting a scene from the Christmas scriptures, or what Christmas means to them, to be used on the worship bulletins during Advent and Christmas. Drawings should be returned to church by November 28. For more information on this project please contact Beth Hansen.

Weekly in-person Sunday School classes continue at Salem. Every Sunday there will be an adult present to lead a class for any youth attending worship. If you would like to receive this weekly e-mail, please contact Chuck Wright.

As always, if you have any questions or ideas concerning our Christian education ministry at Salem, please contact one of our team members.

Thank you!

Beth Hansen, Chuck Wright, Polly Fumagalli

C.E Ministry

Personnel Ministry

This month, we had three changes in Salem staffing. Our Pastor resigned, our Music Director resigned, and (unrelated) we hired a church officer to complete bookkeeping tasks.

Although this has been covered elsewhere in our newsletter, as the Chair of Personnel Ministry, I'd be remiss if I failed to acknowledge the resignation of our pastor, Russ Kirby, who will leave Salem at the end of December. Pastor Russ brought much-needed energy and excitement to our church over the past two years, drawing on his talents and experience to accomplish more than we could have hoped for. Some highlights are that he:

- engaged the “next generation” of leadership through the Young Professionals group.
- shepherded our congregation (kicking and screaming) into virtual worship.
- inspired friends and members of Salem to step up and “wire that sanctuary, learn that PowerPoint, make those visuals for the Sunday worship service, get that banner out front;”
- served as our lead “tech guy,” training others to “zoom those cameras, adjust that audio;”
- helped members of our congregation learn how to “Zoom on those computers;”
- managed to keep us all engaged in worship through the pandemic of a century.
- inspired our church to embrace the potential of becoming a center for musical excellence.

- said “We need to honor and recognize folks who go above & beyond – and let’s start with Miro!
- grieved with and supported numerous families through loss.
- “simply” was always there for his flock when guidance, prayer, caring, or presence was needed.

These points don’t begin to do justice to Pastor Russ’s ministry with Salem. The congregation was surveyed just over a year ago to determine “how is Pastor Russ doing?” Your responses said he was doing very well. You said he was the right person for the job. Loud and clear, our congregation said, “Great job, Pastor Russ!” It’s precisely because our congregation was so appreciative of Pastor Russ that it’s so very difficult to accept his resignation. He will be more than greatly missed. Blessings to you, Pastor Russ, in your next adventures!

Chappell Kingsland, our gifted Music Director, has also resigned, and will also leave Salem at the end of December. We will miss Chappell, his engaging and inspiring talent, his marvelous concerts, and his kind soul. Blessings also to Chappell in his future endeavors!

Our third change in personnel is a more novel one; in November, Salem added one of our existing officers as a paid contractor. Chris Johnson asked Council to approve payment to her for hours she spent doing Salem’s bookkeeping from mid-July through the end of September. After lengthy discussion, six members of Council voted on the matter, and with a 5-1 vote, approved a one-time payment of \$1,500 to Chris. As this is technically contract work, Chris was officially hired as a contractor to Salem.

A happy, thankful note this month – our amazing Administrative Assistant, Lisa Thomas, has once again amazed. Salem’s modem “went on vacation” on November 16, so the church was without internet or email. Lisa spent hours on the phone with Century Link, to no avail. After she went home, she had an epiphany and drove back to Salem. She did a “hard reboot” of the modem, and Voila! The modem is up and running again – for now. Kudos to Lisa!

I am in awe of our great staff – Pastor Russ, Lisa, Chappell, Ani & Chris. Please take a moment in December to let them know you’re thankful for them!

As always, please feel free to reach out to either Polly or Kathleen with questions.

Kathleen King

Personnel Ministry

Mission Moments

Missions this month are the Heifer Project and the Christmas Fund. Last year we were able to buy chicken, rabbits, a part of a water buffalo and more, to help people find a way of supporting themselves and closing the door of poverty.

The Christmas fund helps our retired clergy. It is a UCC 5/5. As of Nov. 26th, Salem has collected 124 pairs of socks for our sock drive for the homeless.



June Seppa

Missions Ministry

Piano Christmas

Join us for this annual tradition on Wednesday, Dec 12 at 7:15 pm.

Chappell Kingsland performs his inimitable renditions of Christmas favorites as high-energy piano solos! The concert is free; donations are appreciated.

Attend in person, watch on Facebook (www.facebook.com/ck4piano/live), or on Zoom. Produced by Wild Beautiful Concerts at Salem.

Chappell Kingsland
Music Ministry

Keeping In Touch

Please note Linda Eggleston has an updated email address! You can reach her at lindaegg2010@gmail.com.

As always, feel free to reach out to the church office if you have any updates, need any assistance, or want to share any information!

adassistant.salemuccdenver@gmail.com

Salem's Youth

During children's time on Sunday the 21st Salem's youth presented a skit "The Thanksgiving Table". It was a hoot!



December Calendar

Council Meeting Tuesday, Dec. 7th, 7 pm, on Zoom

Special Congregational Meeting Dec 12th, 10:30 am, (in person and online)

Worship Sundays, 9:30 am. We are now worshipping in person! Please pay attention to the COVID guidelines. We will also continue with online and by-phone options for services. Join us in person or online!

Bible Study Tuesdays, 10 am by Zoom (online or by phone)

Community Meals Every Wednesday at 6 pm

Piano Christmas Chappell Kingsland Dec 22nd 7:15 pm (in person or on Zoom/Facebook)

Christmas Eve Service Dec. 24th 6 pm (in person and online)

ADVENT – Did you know?

Advent is the very first season of the Christian liturgical year. (So happy new year!) "Advent" means "coming" and "arrival." During the 4 Sundays before and the weeks leading up to Christmas, we wait for the arrival of Christ!



1st Nate Reiser

18th Ellie McHenry

25th Deborah Barnard

Visit us online:

- Go to SalemUCCDenver.org to:
 - Keep updated on COVID-19 related info
 - Sign up for Zoom worship and gatherings
 - See our Calendar of Events
 - Download bulletins and newsletters
 - Learn more about Salem UCC
- Like our **Facebook** page: facebook.com/uccsalem

SALEM
UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
DENVER

Salem United Church of Christ

5300 East Florida Avenue

Phone: 303.759.4649

Denver, CO 80222

Email: Salemuccdenver@gmail.com

Phone: (303) 759-4649

Website: SalemUCCDenver.org

Pastor: Rev. Russ Kirby, M.Div.

Music Director: Chappell Kingsland

Church Administrative Assistant: Lisa Thomas:

adassistant.salemuccdenver@gmail.com



December 2021

| Sun | Mon | Tue | Wed | Thu | Fri | Sat |
|--|--|-----------------------|---|--|-------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | | 1 9AMen's Coffee Club 9 - Art class | 2 7-Contemplation Workshop--Zoom | 3 8:30 - Art Class | 4 |
| 5 9:30-Worship/ Communion | 6 8-11 - Sunflower Christmas Party | 7 10 - Bible Study | 8 9 - Art class | 9 9 - Art Class | 10 9:30 - Art Class | 11 9:30-12:30 Violin Recital |
| 12 9:30-Worship/Handbells | 13 7-Boy Scouts | 14 10-Bible Study | 15 9AMen's Coffee Club | 16 7-Child Care Providers | 17 9:30-Art Class | 18 |
| | 7-Boy Scouts | 7-Quid Scouts | 8-Community Meal | 7 - Concert--Dillion Tyree | | |
| 19 CHRISTMAS PROGRAM 9:30-WORSHIP Sunday School youth Choir//Handbells | 20 Newsletter articles due | 21 10-Bible Study | 22 8-Community Meal 7:15--Piano Christmas | 23 | 24 CHRISTMAS EVE | 25 CHRISTMAS DAY |
| 26 9:30-Worship Baptism | 27 Annual Reports due | 28 10-Bible Study | 29 9AMen's Coffee Club | 30 7-Quid Club | 31 | |
| | 7-Boy Scouts | | 8-Community Meal | | | |