

January 2023

From the Pastors Desk



Dear Friends,

I am incredibly grateful to have received the call to work with you at Salem as your Designated Minister.

The first month here has been a rush for sure, coming to you during Advent and learning new processes and expectations. It feels a bit like being the new in-law at Thanksgiving dinner, figuring out my place in this new family. You have made me feel loved, supported, and welcomed, and I could not ask for more than that.

I am aware there is much work ahead of us, and I am ready for that. The call to Salem was unexpected but I believe the Spirit was at work in this call, for both you and me. I see the beauty and

dedication that you bring to this community. I acknowledge that you have been through a lot in the last couple of years – much healing has taken place, though more work remains. I honor all that you are doing toward both healing and envisioning a new future for this community. Rev. Joanne has been a marvelous support to me – I could not ask for a better partner in this work! The women of the SLC are amazing (Thank you, Beth, Krissy, and Lori!) and each one of you has shown to me a desire to keep dreaming about and believing in the work here.

As I have said to you before, it's a confusing time to be church. So many churches are struggling to find their mojo again – Who are we? What do we believe? How do we make a difference in our community? How do we fit in? There are no easy answers, but I believe you are taking the right steps, listening to the Spirit, and that you have called the right folks to help.

My hope for the next few months is that we can build relationships with each other, create beautiful and meaningful worship together, find ways to serve our community, to heal together, and continue to listen for God's voice as we are called to what is next for Salem.

There is something unique here – I feel it already. You have an openness of heart and spirit that is exceptional, and that openness is going to create a new future for Salem, just wait and see!

- *Pastor Dustin*

Discernment Update

It is Christmas, 1939.

Great Britain is at war with Nazi Germany. Like his father before him, King George VI continues the holiday tradition of addressing the British Empire and this year, he broadcasts from the royal country house at Sandringham where he and his family are celebrating Christmas. You may recall that King George VI--born Albert, called Bertie-- is not a man comfortable with public speaking, to say the least. His struggle to overcome a debilitating stutter adds to his shy nervousness.

Taking a few deep breaths, he begins to speak, slowly yet solidly. Measuring his words carefully, he speaks from the heart: "A new year is at hand. We cannot tell what it will bring. If it brings peace, how thankful we shall all be. If it brings us continued struggle, we shall remain undaunted." He speaks for nearly nine minutes, and says, "I feel we may all find a message of encouragement in the lines which, in my closing words, I would like to say to you." Now he reads from a poem written by an unknown woman named Minnie Louise Haskins and given to him by his 13-year-old daughter, Princess Elizabeth.

*I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,
'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.'
And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.
That shall be better to you than a light and safer than a known way.'
So, I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.
And God led me to the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.*

He finishes his speech by saying. "May that Almighty Hand guide and uphold us all."

Now, 83 years later, 2023 is upon us. We stand at the gate of a new year with great uncertainties in many ways--politically, economically, ecologically, socially to name a few. Atrocities are being committed, person against person, in what seems a disturbingly regular rhythm. Some days it is difficult to just keep our wits about us, let alone be certain of anything much. Where, O where, does the church stand in the midst of this time?

As your Discernment Minister, what I can offer you is the surest thing I know, the only certain thing in my life, the same thing King George VI offered his people in 1939. I can offer you the Hand of God in the form of our Spiritual Discernment Process. That's what it is—the Hand of God.

In the next few weeks and months of our Process, many vital issues will require discernment, beginning with how Salem UCC will accomplish the serious ministry of Lay Leadership; updating Salem's bylaws; discerning what configuration Salem UCC will be led to as a worshipping body; discerning specific mission endeavors, and others.

From the Gospel of John, "The light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it." I can offer you the Hand of God to be your everlasting light, to be your unflinching way in any darkness.

If you have been a faithful participant in our Discernment gatherings, keep coming. If you haven't been involved (remember that everyone is invited!) you can take part in the kind of thing we do

together by sitting with the questions below, just to see what Spirit might be speaking to you as we enter this new year and all that lies in front of you in the next 12 months. Get quiet, light a candle if you have one, and listen deeply:



What does it feel like to be standing at the gate of the year?

What and who do you see there?

What is the gate like?

Can you push it open?

Is it heavy and stubborn, or does it swing freely?

If you can open it, can you step over the threshold?

What is it like to hear that you must go out into the dark unknown and find the Hand of God?

Can you call on the God-light within you for the courage, the inner vision to go forth?

And what can you imagine the Hand of God might feel like?

And what might it mean to be led to the breaking of day? Where is that for you?

Where do you need a new dawning in your life? What do you desire that “dawning” to be?

Please remember that any ideas or suggestions that come to you in prayerful consideration about Salem's future can be brought to and moved through the Discernment Process—this is already happening. And it works!

Let us stand side-by-side at the gate of this year, in the darkness, and find the Hand of God, together.

*In the Promise of the Christ who keeps coming to us,
Rev. Joanne Buchanan
Discernment Minister*

Worship and Christian Education

December was full of anticipation of the birth of Jesus. We at Salem watched and listened to the word as we lit the candles of Hope, Peace, Love, Joy and the welcoming of Jesus with the Christ candle. With the help of Adyson, Jaxson and Krissy we took a look at the biblical side of the twelve days of Christmas. Thank you for sharing! After the service on the 18th, Dustin created the glue and provided the materials for us to start a new tradition of creating Gingerbread houses. We had a lot of foremen, and 4 houses were built that all would enjoy living in. Thank you, Dustin, for a GREAT afternoon.

Dustin was a part of the Blue Christmas service on Dec 18th held at Sixth Avenue United Church of Christ.

Our Christmas Eve service brought the warmth of the season. The songs and scripture reminded us of the gift of the baby Jesus. We listened to the story of the candy cane, and we all went home with one as a reminder of Christmas. Special guitar music brought to us by a friend of Dustin, Ms. Lee Hamre, Thank you for that beautiful music, Lee!

Christmas morning brought a celebration of Jesus. The candles were lit, the Christmas tree bright and the baby Jesus was born in the manger. Ava Maria sung by Dustin provided us with a Special Christmas surprise. Our Christmas morning guest pianist Jeanine Armstrong shared her spirit of the season.

After our News Years Day service, we took down Christmas (always sad) and had fun with a Potluck and games.

The Worship/C.E.Ministry will continue to work with Dustin on 2023 services and activities.

Help us to make 2023 a great year! Our next meeting will be held via Zoom, on January 17th at 7:00 pm, so please make plans to join us!

-Beth, Polly, Norma, Chuck, Deborah, Lisa and Dustin

Salem Leadership Committee

Happy New Year!

As we begin 2023, the SLC would like to thank our members of Salem for their support and understanding. Three women took on this role not knowing what they were getting themselves into. When we reflect, it doesn't seem like much but as a community we should celebrate the work we have done in the last year. Reverend Joanne Buchanan has worked with many of us through discernment. Salem has had some youth Sundays that always bring a smile to our faces. We welcomed Dustin Adkins to the pulpit, who is already starting new traditions with the building of gingerbread houses with our youth. There were more observers/coaches than actual builders. The SLC met with Dustin at the end of December to discuss some of the priorities for the future of Salem. January 8th, you can expect a shortened worship service in order to fit in time to discuss Salem's bylaws, please come with ideas, zoom will be an option to attend! After our discussion we will continue with discernment led by Joanne. All are invited and welcome! Mark your calendars because the following weekend, January 15th you can expect the same, but this time we will have a discussion on the future of Salem while looking at Salem's budget. If you can't make it in person, we will also offer this session on Zoom. This will be followed by another discernment session. As always, the SLC is looking for participation and leadership for the upcoming New Year! Lastly, our annual meeting will be held on Sunday, January 29th right after church. There will be a lot of things to vote on! Again, thank you from the SLC as this will be the last update from Lori, Krissy and Beth. Cheers to new leadership, new ideas, and new beginnings!

Krissy Berry, Beth Hansen & Lori Carroll

Salem Zoom Fellowship

Our next meeting is Tuesday January 24th at 7 pm. If you would like to join us, please contact the church office for the Zoom meeting information. If you would like to be part of our fellowship but cannot make the next meeting, we would welcome your input about alternative days and times to gather. Share your input with Lisa Thomas or Norma Hansen.

Mission Moments



The Pastor's Discretionary Fund is supported by donations from church members and is used by the pastors discretion, especially at short notice, to assist individuals and families in the church and in the community. All funds are used for this purpose, and all funds given out are recorded and accounted for – respecting anonymity of the donor, but listing the circumstances (E.g., “Fuel assistance for single parent”). To donate, please specify Pastors Discretionary Fund in the note of your check, and.... Thank you!

Happy Birthday!

18th Adyson Neumann

20th June Seppa

January Calendar Highlights

Bible Study - Participate on Zoom at 10:00 am on Tuesday.

Worship - Sundays, 9:30 am. Join us in person or online!

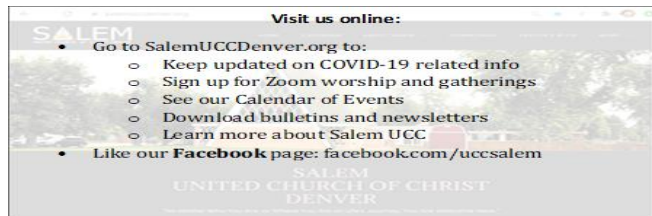
Discernment Meeting - Jan. 8th at 11:00 am.

Zoom C,E Worship – Jan. 17th at 7:00 pm.

Zoom Fellowship – Jan 24th at 7:00 pm.

February Newsletter – Jan. 27th will be the deadline to submit your articles.

Annual Meeting – Jan. 29th at 10:30 am.



Salem United Church of Christ

5300 East Florida Avenue
Denver, CO 80222
Phone: (303) 759-4649

Email: Salemuccdenver@gmail.com
Website: SalemUCCDenver.org

Church Staff:

adassistant.salemuccdenver@gmail.com

Designated Interim Pastor- Dustin Adkins

Discernment Minister - Joanne Buchanan

Administrative Assistant - Lisa Thomas

Financial Assistant - Ani Martinez

Music Director - Isabella Ashton