



No Matter Who You Are, Or Where You Are On Life's Journey, You Are Welcome Here.
Salem United Church of Christ, 5300 E. Florida Avenue, Denver, CO 80222

March 2024

From the Pastors Desk

True confession, Y'all: I haven't done a very good job of being Lent-y this year.

I was talking with a couple of you at church after I returned from vacation last week, and mentioned how sometimes the work of pastoring can be a distraction from deepening spirituality. There's a lot of this work that is tending to business and practical matters, and planning weekly worship, and addressing pastoral care, and...well... the contemplative call of the Lenten season can get lost in all that.

I know some pastors for whom introspection and spiritual contemplation come naturally. It's part of the work that requires a bit more work for me. Every pastor brings a different set of gifts, and that's a good thing. There are those who encounter God best while on their knees in prayer or listening for God on mountaintops, and there are those of us who encounter God best in community, in worship, alongside one another. Neither is a better or worse way to encounter God – I'm not sure there is a right or wrong way to do it – but the Lenten season calls us to introspection and contemplation and to our personal journey to get back to basics with God.

Luckily, most of Lent remains, and there is always grace to cover us if we haven't (or can't) yet make the deeper spiritual investment. I encourage you to ask yourselves in what ways is the journey going well for you? What's helping you connect with God more deeply? I'm spending time with this season's UCC Lenten meditations – if you're not receiving them, it's not too late to get on the email list, by the way! If you are not making the deeper connection with God and self, what is holding you back?

Don't forget, Beloved, Easter is on the way soon to remind us that God is enough and will fill in all the gaps and cracks where we may feel incomplete. We aren't going to get it all right, and thankfully, that's alright.

Every blessing to you as we journey towards Easter. Wherever you are, know God is with you. See you in church!

With Love,
Pastor Dustin

Administrative Team

Salems administrative team is working with an eye toward our April congregational meeting. At our last February meeting we made recommendations to the Finance & Property Team regarding some security concerns and discussed progress on documents that we will be considering in upcoming meetings. The team is working with Pastor Dustin to produce a boundaries document for retired/former clergy and made recommendations around a document retention policy. We also hope to have a non-discrimination employment policy ready for consideration by the congregation at our April meeting.

We also discussed the benefits of having a behavioral covenant in place – a guiding document outlining how we would work together as a congregation. We agreed that this was a longer-term process that would need to involve congregational input, so we will be working on this over the coming months. As always, we welcome the input of the congregation in our work – Please see Pastor Dustin, Deborah Barnard, Polly Fumagalli, or Su Wright with any questions.

140th Anniversary!

Salem's 140th Anniversary is coming up soon! The Worship/CE Team has discussed a number of ideas, and we welcome your feedback. We decided that most of our 140th celebrations would be centered around our actual 'birthday' mid-July, and again around Fall Kickoff in September. We agreed that we should do a few things well rather than stretching ourselves thin, so keep an eye on events the weekend of July 13-14 and again mid-September. If you have ideas or would like to help plan, please see Pastor Dustin, Beth Hansen, Norma Hansen, or Chuck Wright.

Christian Education and Worship Team Meeting, Mar 12th 7 pm

Our joyful work over the past month is lifted up throughout this newsletter! We will meet on Zoom, Tuesday, March 12, 7pm., to discuss and plan upcoming worship themes, educational opportunities, and special events with an emphasis on our church's 140th Anniversary. You are invited to join us! Contact Chuck Wright or the church office for Zoom meeting information.

Lenten Zoom Bible Study and Spiritual Resources

A variety of spiritual resources for the season of Lent are available at church for families and individuals. Look on the resource table in the Narthex, or for the resource bags in the back of the sanctuary. Feel free to pick up any all resources for yourself or someone you know.

The Thursday, 7pm, study of Mark's Gospel will continue March 7th, 14th, and 21st. This is a Zoom only study led by Chuck Wright intended to be an overview of the entire Gospel with a focus on the historical, cultural, and theological contexts of this unique narrative of Jesus' ministry. You are invited to join us for any, or all, of our discussions. The study is a joint effort of Salem and First Congregational Church, U.C.C., Loveland.

Salem Zoom Fellowship, Mar 19th.

What are your memories of "being" church? That will be the question for our monthly Salem Zoom Fellowship on Tuesday, March 17, 7pm. From 40 years ago, or just last Sunday, our memories of church are important signposts from the past that can inform our hopes for the future of our church today. After the opening time of checking-in, we will share our memories in informal discussion. Zoom meeting information will be emailed on the Monday before our get-together.

Conversational Coffee Club

Our lively group of co-ed conversationalists will meet March 6th, and 20th at 9:00 am, at the church, for spontaneous discussions of whatever comes to mind. Coffee and goodies provided! Bring your topic of contact that day and join us!

Congregational Meeting April 7th

Our next Congregational Meeting will be held on Sunday, April 7th, following the worship service. These regular meetings provide us all with the opportunity to receive updates, ask questions, and make decisions about the ministries of our church. Please plan now on participating!

Missions

During the month of March Salem will hold a food drive for Archways Food Bank on March 16th. Salem will hold this food drive which is open to the community to participate. If bad weather is bad, the drive will be held on the following Saturday March 23rd. The hours of the drive will be 10 am – 1 pm. During the month there will be a box to collect non-perishable foods from March 1-31st. Please no expired or open foods.

The second mission is a UCC 5 for 5 - Great Hour of Sharing.

– June Seppa

A Word from our Moderator

Encouraging Conversations Might Save Us

Article by Anna Golladay on February 15, 2024, written by: Rev. Laura Robinson

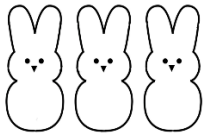
On Monday morning, I sat down for a pre-scheduled coffee meeting with a colleague. It wasn't a meeting I particularly wanted to go to. I was grieving the violence in Rafah. I was disgruntled by the immense wealth displayed at a football game when so many in this country struggle to make ends meet. I was scared, angry, and exhausted in the face of another wave of South Carolina (the state my partner and I call home) legislation to curtail access to Gender Affirming medical care. All in all, I was feeling pretty hopeless, and I wasn't in the heart- or mind space for any conversation, much less a collaborative, future-looking one. But this meeting had been on the calendar for weeks, and the coffee shop has good cortados, so I went. My conversation partner and I were meeting to talk about how to bring the Our Whole Lives Sex Ed curriculum to South Carolina. It's an uphill climb convincing folks down here (and let's be honest, anywhere) that a comprehensive sex ed curriculum is important to prioritize. But the topic of the conversation feels almost less important than the outcome. Somehow, by the end of our hour together, something like excitement and hope were starting to make their way back into me. Something like a vision for this one piece of ministry was taking shape. It was a meeting I didn't want to go to. And yet – it became one of the pieces that's getting me through. Building networks, relationships, community, and partnerships takes time, but it's how I'm able to stay in this work. It's how I'm able to remain in this fight for love, healing, and justice – even amid so much heartbreak. So much tragedy. So much injustice. Here at Convergence, we often speak of how important our conversation partners are to the work we do. We value so many of you – those of you who pour into OUR mission and the work we are called to do in the world. It is one of the reasons that we host our online summits, places where dozens of individual voices come together to give energy to a topic important for our days. So, I hold these questions out to you: Who are you in conversation with? Who's helping you carry the vision? Who is holding grief, excitement, compassion, and hope by your side? In this season of love and rending hearts, may you be held by your communities (human and non-human alike), and may you know you're not alone in any of this. May that knowledge carry you through to another day. And may peace and joy and hope be yours.

From my hurting heart to yours,

Rev. Laura Robinson

Annual Easter Egg Hunt!

Salem's Annual Easter Egg Hunt is just around the corner. Invite your family, friends and neighbors and bring the kids and their baskets! Ages 2 years old through 5th grade!! Saturday, March 30th @10:00 AM Rain or Shine! If you would like to volunteer you are welcome to hide eggs, dye a dozen hard boiled eggs, bring candy, fill eggs, or pray for good weather! If you have questions, please reach out to Krissy Berry!



Bring the kids and their basket!

Ages 2 years old through 5th grade!!

When: Saturday, March 30th, 2024, at 10:00 am

Rain or Shine

Where: Salem UCC, 5300 E. Florida Ave.

303-759-4649

March Calendar Highlights

Bible Study	Every Tuesday on Zoom at 10:00 am.
Worship C/E Zoom	March 12 at 7:00 pm.
Community Meal	Every Wednesday at 6 pm.
Conversational Coffee Club	March 20 at 9 am.
Property and Finance	March 20 at 10:30 am.
Zoom Fellowship	March 19 at 7 pm.
April Newsletter Deadline	March 29.

- Sunday, **March 10th** Pi (3.14) Sunday! We invite everyone to share pie with us after church at our weekly after church coffee in the community hall.
- Sunday, **March 17th**: St. Patrick's Day – Be sure to wear your green :)
- Palm Sunday, **March 24th**: Celebrate Jesus' triumphant entry with us!
- Maundy Thursday, **March 28th**: 6:30 pm – The Metro UCC churches will worship together at Kirk of Bonnie Brae UCC.
- Good Friday, **March 29th**: 12:00 -3:00 pm – Sanctuary will be open for a time of contemplation and prayer, with Good Friday scriptures read at Noon. 7:00 pm – Christ the King Anglican service in Salem's sanctuary.
- **March 30th** – Easter Egg hunt! Volunteers are needed at 9:00 am to work the hunt, with candy donations welcomed anytime (pre-wrapped candies only.) Egg hunting festivities begin at 10:00 am. See Pastor Dustin, Krissy Berry, or Beth Hansen with questions.
- **March 31st** - Easter Breakfast and Worship – Come for breakfast at 8:30 am and stay for Easter worship with Communion at 10:00 am.