



*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

## February 2021

### A Word From Pastor Russ

I find myself busy most of the time. Sometimes, though, I have a moment of non-busyness. Sometimes, in those non-busy times, I feel tears well up in my eyes. I feel strong emotions well up in my soul. I feel... overwhelm. I feel it saturating and dripping from my soul, filling me up, overflowing, like it wants to wash me away.

I inhale deeply as if to dry it out, suck it down. I distract myself with something else to stay busy on to hold these feelings at bay. I push it down with food, hold it back with work, run away from it with hobbies. It works for a little while, then those feelings rush back in.

So, I try to look at it logically. I see the reasons I feel this way: constant, grinding tension of a pandemic, all the pain and struggle going on in the world around me, layered over the regular stuff of life that comes and goes. I wonder how I can get past it, over it, around it... And then I find it welling up again in my soul and in my eyes.

It's like gravity: It's always there. I can work against it all day, but over the hours, over the days, over the year, it wears me down. It always wins. Resistance takes work, wears out my soul, and pulls me down. Like gravity, a constant. I'm exhausted from working against it, tired of trying to walk on the sunny side of the street that seems to always be uphill these days. It's like trying to keep a balloon inflated that has a hole in it; some days it might as well be a thousand holes.

And my colleagues all talk of it. They feel this way, too, and I am not alone. And church members have told me they feel the such overwhelm, such exhaustion, such work and worry, such a struggle.

And then—in a surprise moment—I bump into someone I know and just chat to find out I am not alone in these feelings. In an unexpected instant, I find a laugh. During a prayer, I feel bolstered, just a little lift. Or I take a moment to meditate, or to daydream, or discover a tad of hope in my soul. In a moment now and then, I find release from the gravity of our times to float the clouds and fly free.

And sometimes... Sometimes... I just stop and let it all out. I let the overwhelm well up and crash through me. I stop holding on, holding it down, holding to my sanity. I let the saturation go, along with the tears, washing away some of burden of these times. And I thank God for the moment of release, that I may rise and move forward once again.

So, I pray for you when you feel this way. I pray for your overwhelm, your struggles, your stress and exhaustion. I pray that you try not to take it out on others or yourself. I pray that God will hold you close when you weep and when you feel, especially if social distancing keeps loved ones away. And I pray you find your release, your hope, your lift, your gravity-defying moment when you may fly free, so you may rise and move forward once again.



Pastor Russ

## Moderator Moments

It's my great honor to serve as Salem Council Moderator – and I thank you for your vote of confidence. I look forward to working with our Council and congregation as we move forward.

We're truly blessed to have so many from Salem step up to lead our church. Our "new" council includes many members who will continue their terms, as well as members who have served in the past, and members who will be serving for the first time. This rich blend of experience, continuity, and new ideas will serve us well.

The challenges of 2020 have positioned us well as we move into 2021 – we've gained expertise in reaching out beyond the walls of our sanctuary and into our community. Opportunity awaits!

Michael Stice

## February Mission

We will honor the tradition of "Souper Bowl" Sunday for February by making our own soup on Superbowl Sunday and by making a monetary donation to Women's Bean Project. Please make your check out to Salem making sure you put Women's Bean Project on the memo line. Unfortunately, we were not able to sell their products this year but hopefully we can next February, however you can sometimes find their 10 Bean Soup at King Soopers and Safeway.



## February Calendar:

**Worship** Sundays, 9:30 am by Zoom\* (online or by phone)

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

**Virtual Community Social**, Wednesdays at 6 pm by Zoom\* (online or by phone)

Tuesday, February 9<sup>th</sup> 7 pm: **Council Meeting** on Zoom\*

Wednesday, February 7<sup>th</sup>, 6:30 pm: **Multi-church Ash Wednesday Service**, Zoom\*

\*to join by Zoom, sign up on our website at SalemUCCDenver.org

## "BUY A BANNER" Campaign

The worship ministry had a great response to the outside banner we had for Christmas, we have decided to have banners made for the year round to celebrate —i.e., Easter/lent, rally day, and yes "Welcome to in person Worship June 20th"

We would like to propose a "BUY a Banner" Campaign, this donation will go for buying banners to hang up in front of the church. WE wanted to let the community around us know that we are here for them even though we are still closed. Also, this is a way to advertise our website and reaching out to others. Thank you in advance for helping in any way you can.

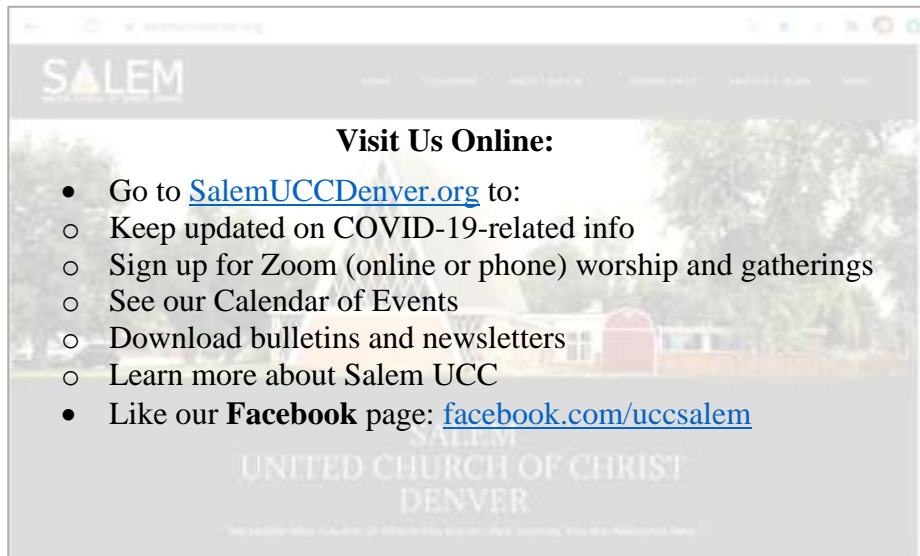
Two things: You can send a donation in any time for any amount just mark it for "banners" and it will be separate from your pledge. WE are excited to celebrate our church, its members and the work we all do and this is one more way to reach out others.

Thank you to all, we appreciate all you do. The Worship ministry



February 3 ▸ Beth Hansen  
February 8 ▸ Keenan Neumann  
February 9 ▸ Michael Waterhouse  
February 20 ▸ West Smith

February 22 ▸ Stephanie Gibson  
February 27 ▸ Jeremy Neumann  
February 28 ▸ Bette Earsman



**Visit Us Online:**

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

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DENVER

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| Phone: (303) 759-4649                         | Website: <a href="http://SalemUCCDenver.org">SalemUCCDenver.org</a>                 |
| <b>Pastor: Rev. Russ Kirby, M.Div.</b>        | <b>Music Director: Chappell Kingsland</b>                                           |
| <b>Administrative Assistant: Debbie Gordy</b> |                                                                                     |