



THE SALEM TIDINGS

JUNE 2020

No matter who you are, or where you are in life's journey, you are welcome here!

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A Word from Pastor Russ

How can the Church help?

Years ago, I learned through both training and experience that ministry often means that I shouldn't "fix" or "smooth over" people's problems. I can advocate for people, listen to people, pray for and with people, and cry with them, but I cannot fix or smooth over. Doing so disempowers them. People in crisis **MUST** go through it rather than being helped to avoid it. You can't fix or smooth over things like death or abuse.

Knowing this, it frustrates me to see well-meaning people try to "fix" or "smooth over" the racial tensions and protests in which we find ourselves now as the month of June begins. Blacks protest because racist deaths and abuse have not diminished since the 1992 Rodney King riots, or even the 1960s Civil Rights movement. They are angry that lawmakers and police offer lip service (which is smoothing over), instead of substantive change. They continue to be anxious and fearful just trying to live their lives, and now the tension has boiled over.

And then some people try to smooth things over or point out the "middle ground." Yet doing so diminishes protesters' message, even making it irrelevant. For example, when "Black Lives Matter" (BLM) is countered with "Blue Lives Matter" or "All Lives Matter," this diminishes and dilutes the fact that **SOME** of all lives are being killed and incarcerated at higher rates than the **REST** of all lives.

Trying to "Fix" or "smooth over" tensions in times like these isn't healthy. The discomfort and dissonance is the point: change doesn't happen when those in power are comfy. Jesus made people in power uncomfortable, too, speaking truth while enabling and supporting dissonance to improve the lives of the oppressed. As you'll recall, he was killed for doing this.

Church can be comforting in times of loss and pain, and also during special times like Christmas and Easter. But in important times like these the Church is called not to comfort, but to support and enable the discomfort and dissonance (not violence), motivating change for the better. It's not easy; call it "tough love." Live in the tension. Appreciate that dissonance and discomfort. And endeavor to make a tangible difference for the future. It is what the Church—we—are called to be and do. For as we've done to the least of these, so we've done to Christ (Matthew 25:40).

Blessings in the Tension,

Pastor Russ Kirby

Moderator MomentsPolly Fumagalli

Summer greetings for this month of June as we continue to navigate the many changes to our ways of life during the COVID-19 pandemic. Since April 2, I have attended all five of the Moderators' Meetings for the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ. Between 12 and 25 Moderators from Colorado, Utah and Wyoming UCC churches meet via Zoom for an hour every other week to connect and share our experiences, ideas and support. Rev. Erin Gilmore, Associate Conference Minister, spiritually leads our meetings and discussions about our challenges and successes, worship services and congregations, finances and plans to re-open our churches, racism and justice, and so much more. Our times together help each of us to look and move forward since we will not and cannot go back to the past. It is my honor and privilege to represent Salem UCC at these meetings. Please continue to pray for leaders, responders, medical staff and workers who are working around the clock and around the world for people near and far. Continue to call relatives, friends and neighbors to stay connected. Please help others and donate as you can. Take care of yourselves and know that you are not alone. And most of all, please continue to find goodness and light as God speaks to us, guides us and helps us every day and every night!

A Call to Action on Pentecost Sunday (as announced on 5/31/20):

I am sad and I am mad about the murder of George Floyd by the police officers in Minneapolis last Monday. The racism against, violence toward and killings of black men, women and children have to stop. It starts with you and it starts with me and it starts today. Deborah Barnard and I attended the "Pentecost in Protest" Zoom meeting on 5/30/20 for the Rocky Mountain Conference of the United Church of Christ ("RMC-UCC"). Over 40 clergy and church leaders shared concerns and sorrows and we have started a call to action. Some vital steps are to pray, to love and to vote. Another step is to watch the sermon by Rev. Dr. Otis Moss III called "The Cross and the Lynching Tree: A Requiem for Ahmaud Arbery." Ahmaud was a young man who was murdered while jogging in February in the state of Georgia. You can watch the sermon any time by searching for it on YouTube. Also, check out the national UCC website (UCC.org) and the RMC-UCC website (RMCUCC.org) for more ways to become informed and involved. In closing, how can you and how can I effect justice and change not only in our country but also in the world? On this Sunday of Pentecost, may the breath of God put a fire in you and in me to speak up, stand up and show up! Thank you very much!

God bless, Polly Fumagalli, Moderator

Update on Opening of Salem

The Rocky Mountain Conference, on May 14, 2020, sent out a 10-page document "promoting safety and security for our congregations and communities". In this document, the "Board recommends that all congregations commission a strategic planning team within their own church to assess the wide range of issues associated with the decision to hold in-building worship and other activities".

Salem had already established a "COVID-19 task force" and after reading this document, the Task Force decided to postpone opening Salem till **September 13** (Rally Day) to give them time to review the recommendations and come up with a strategic plan that not only works for Salem but also for its renters. Not only practices but liabilities were taken into consideration for this decision. This also gives Salem time to see how the reopening of Denver goes over the course of summer and to learn from others' mistakes. The Task Force presented their recommendations to the Church Council on May 21 and the Council approved this new opening date.

If things improve dramatically over the summer, Salem always has the option of opening sooner. In future newsletters, this Task Force will update its readers if there are new revelations. Again, this postponement was not taken lightly, but as someone said earlier, "if we look back and we were too protective, that is exactly where we should be now".

Financial Updateby Chris Johnson

I wanted to let everyone know where we are sitting financially and we are doing ok. Our Salem Family has been terrific in getting their pledges to Nate so we can pay our bills, meet salaries and continue Salem's work. But we are not out of the woods, so to speak, yet! Please continue to meet your pledge promise as we move into the summer months and still continue to have Sunday worship virtually. You can continue to send your checks directly to:

Nate Reiser
6180 E. Caley Dr.
Centennial, CO 80111

If you'd like to send a Venmo transaction please contact me directly and we will figure it out. During this entire Covid-19 time I have been working to apply for the Payroll Protection Loan Program and it continues to be an ongoing process. I will keep you updated. Thank you again for your continued support! Please remember Your Salem Family throughout the Summer months! Stay well and stay safe!

MISSIONS MOMENTS

Going forward for the remaining months of 2020 Salem's missions will be as follows:

- 1) June – Feeding Denver's Hungry – According to Jim, the founder of this mission, his organization has a much higher demand since Covid-19 has affected so many people. Your funds help him to buy and distribute food on the 4th Thursday of the month.
- 2) July – Neighbors In Need
- 3) August – Archway School Supply Drive and Our Church's Wider Mission
- 4) September – The Denver Hospice
- 5) October - Salem's Community Meal
- 6) November – Salem Stewardship and Sock Drive if UCC holds one this year
- 7) December – Heifer Project and UCC Christmas Fund

Since the church remains closed to the public right now, the food in our Food Pantry will be taken to help Feeding Denver's Hungry mission. The plan is to take this food on June 9th.

Salem's continuing missions are The Cancelled Stamp Project and collecting used eyeglasses for The Lion's Club mission to distribute eyewear to those in need.

There will be NO hands-on mission this summer but hopefully we can do one in the future.

BIRTHDAYS IN JUNE



- 2 Miro Subotic
- 8 Jenny Earsman

ENJOY YOUR SPECIAL DAY!!!

Please join us:

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)

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

Thursday, June 18, 7 pm: Council Meeting by Zoom (online or by phone)

Church Website:

Visit us online at SalemUCCDenver.org to:

- Sign up for Zoom (online or phone) worship and gatherings
- Learn about Salem UCC
- View our Calendar of Events
- Download bulletins and newsletters
- Read the Pastor's blog with sermon summaries and reflection questions

