

SALEM UNITED
CHURCH OF CHRIST

CHAPEL CHIMES NEWSLETTER

JULY 2020

FIRST NOTES

By now, a number of you will have gotten either an e-mail or a letter explaining Salem's plans for resuming in-person worship in August. Since we knew that there would be many questions about the move, we wanted to pack in as much information as possible into that bit of correspondence. The trade-off in sending that information is that one can't hit all of the notes in a short letter. That's why I want to fill in some of the gaps in this "First Notes" page.

It's easy to see where the reaction to the return of in-person worship might be a mixed bag for a number of folks: yes, there's the joy at the thought of coming together to worship in person, but there's the disappointment that comes from knowing that a number of things will be different. It's a reminder that, while things may have progressed some since March, they haven't come all the way back and it's going to take some time before they do. It's a reminder that the virus hasn't gone away and that we're playing on a ground of its choosing, not ours. For some people, the joy may come with some grief over what is missing.

And we'll be missing some cherished pieces of the worship experience. No handshakes or hugs. No singing. No fellowship after worship. And there are the pieces that we're adding that will seem very strange to us: social distancing and masks. I would hope that people would realize that this stage in the process will not last forever. A day will come when we can more safely return to the way things were in early March. However, that day is not here yet.

I, personally, take no joy in the things we'll have to give up for awhile. Those of you who know me will know how much it will kill me to not have vocal music in worship at the outset: I love listening to, writing, and performing vocal music. I know that some of you will find social distancing and masking difficult. However, we do those things on the best advice of the medical experts and local governmental authorities. Those practices are put in place not only to keep ourselves safe, but to keep our brothers and sisters in Christ safe should we become asymptomatic or pre-symptomatic carriers of the virus. We do these practices out of love, knowing that our actions impact more than ourselves. We need to do all that we can, being as diligent as possible. The love of Christ calls us to do no less.

And, given the place where we are now, it's perfectly OK to say that you will continue to participate in the live-steam/on-line/cable/radio offerings of worship rather than attend in-person worship at this time. All of our situations are different and each of us lives with a different set of risks; each of us must make our own decisions.

However, while grief and anger over loss may be part of what some of us may be feeling, it's not the final word that I want to leave you. We also come to this stage with joy and gratitude for God's faithfulness all through that journey from March to the current time. We are grateful for the good health of our church community. We are grateful for the new ways of doing church that we've discovered along the way and for the people we

wouldn't have reached without those ways. We are thankful for the gifts, the thoughts, and the prayers of all of the household of faith in these past weeks and months, especially. We have come through this stage of the journey with the strength and resources that God has provided. What hasn't killed us has made us stronger.

So we move ahead, friends. Slowly, one-step-at-a-time, perhaps, but moving ahead.

And again, if you have questions, concerns, or find yourself in a crisis situation, please do not hesitate to contact the church office by phone 920.892.7456 or e-mail (salemuccofficeplywi@gmail.com) or phone me directly (920.838.0405).

Shalom aleichem—Peace be with you.

Rev. Jim Hoppert

LECTIONARY READINGS

Sunday, July 5, 2020
Fifth Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Scripture: Genesis 24:34-38, 42-29, 58-67
Psalm: Psalm 45:10-17
Epistle: Romans 7:15-25a
Gospel: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

Sunday, July 12, 2020
Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Scripture: Genesis 25:19-34
Psalm: Psalm 119:105-112
Epistle: Romans 8:1-11
Gospel: Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23

Sunday, July 19, 2020
Seventh Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Scripture: Genesis 28:10-19a
Psalm: Psalm 139:1-12, 23-24
Epistle: Romans 8:12-25
Gospel: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

Sunday, July 26, 2020
Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrew Scripture: Genesis 29:15-28
Psalm: Psalm 105:1-11
Epistle: Romans 8:26-39
Gospel: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52