



THE SALEM VISIONARY

December 2023

But be Doers of the Word, and not Hearers only. James 1:22

A Season of Joy **Joy Out of Thanksgiving**

Salem is embracing the Christmas Season in a culmination of celebrating our 175th anniversary of her establishment as a Methodist congregation in the southeast region of North Carolina. A Season of Joy is a good way to describe our life together and our celebrations of Christmas. Moving from a month of Thanksgiving brings an overwhelming presence of JOY celebrating God with us.

“Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name . . . Immanuel,” which is translated, “God with us.”

Matthew 1:23

All of our lives without Christ held existence without meaning. We were empty of hope and full of fear. Every day brought more struggles without an understanding of the ultimate purpose and direction in life. Death had a grip on us. The burdens of this world were more than we could carry. Being overwhelmed by the darkness of a life without Christ soon entrapped us in a world of depression and discouragement.

God foretold the birth of the Christ Child. It was a birth that brought a new day. It was the inbreaking of the light of God into the darkness of our world. That one event brought a presence of God into our lives that brought a JOY without measure. The JOY that we celebrate this season is not limited by time or by an event. The JOY we celebrate is all year long. It is a JOY that flows out of thanksgiving.

When I am in a discouraging time, I simply begin to thank God for all the good things. I think about the blessings that I do have in my life. Before long my focus is no longer on those discouraging things of

my life. My focus begins to center around God and all the good he brings. The JOY comes out of my thanksgiving.

One of my favorite songs that helps turn around bad moments is a little children’s chorus, “I’ve got the Joy, Joy, Joy.” I just begin to sing this song and the atmosphere of a day will change. Think of those songs that you can sing that express JOY in your life. Let’s make this truly a season of JOY and let it flow.

Winning them to Jesus,

Pastor Gil



Stephen Ministry
The Longest Night Service



It's the most wonderful time of the year, or not. Many struggle with depression and grief during the holiday season. Whether it is the grief of missing loved ones, the pressures of decorating and shopping, or just overwhelming schedules, holidays are stressful.

The **Longest Night Service** will be held in the Sanctuary at Salem on

Thursday, December 21 at 7 pm

This day marks the winter solstice, when the sun shines the least and the night is the longest of the year.

It's the longest night of the year for everybody.

Every passing year brings challenges. This is a service to acknowledge that pain and sadness are a part of life. It is a healing service for the holiday - a service of darkness to light.

You are encouraged to come as you are, embrace the darkness, experience your feelings, and allow the Holy Spirit to speak into your life.

Together we will light Christ's candle and share His light for assurance, comfort, strength, and healing.

This service is offered by the
Salem Stephen Ministers
and is open to the community.

Salem Methodist
CHURCH



Sharing the Gospel
Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow

This is the 175th year since Salem's founding as a church in Eastover. We are celebrating all year long. Mark your calendar so that you can join in the celebrations.

December 8 - Not So Silent Night - Salem Childcare Programs 6:30 pm

December 9 - Youth Christmas Party 5-7 pm

December 10 - Children's Christmas Pageant 11 am
Worship

December 17 - Choir's Christmas Cantata 11 am Worship

December 21 - The Longest Night Service 7 pm

December 24 - A Dickens Christmas 11 am Worship

December 24 - Christmas Eve Candlelight Service 5 pm



Salem Kids at Home church are loving our weekly craft and bible lesson! This month we have talked about being thankful and giving thanks! The month of December we will focus on the birth of Jesus and the true meaning of Christmas! We would love to have even more children join us as we strive to grow and teach little ones more about Jesus!

Lauren Wise



The SMASH and Preschool staff would like to thank the SPRC for the wonderful appreciation meal & gifts on Thursday, November 2nd. It was a great night for everyone to come together and fellowship and play games.

On Thursday, November 16th Mr. Frank made a fantastic meal for the kids, staff and a few members of the church who were at the church working.

We have been busy preparing for our "Not So Silent Night" on Friday, December 8th @ 6:30 p.m.. The kids will sing songs and have cookies and a special visit from Santa, who will read the Christmas Story and take pictures with families. Everyone is welcome to come; we would love to see you.

The teachers have been busy decorating their rooms and bulletin boards for the Advent season. Please stop by and see all the wonderful artwork made by our children.

Shout outs to Rachel Horne for painting a tree and the children of SMASH for making a "SMASH Tree of Life" with their handprints. We hope everyone has a Merry CHRISTmas and a Happy New Year.

Blessings,
Denise Kirkwood



As we approach the end of the calendar year, we have a lot of different things to look back on and many things to look forward to in the upcoming year.

This November, our youth had a ton of fun helping pack boxes at the Operation Christmas Child packing party! There were so many different groups that showed up to help that it took almost no time at all! We had many teenagers helping out, some even packing six boxes at a time.

We view our Salem Youth as a family, so of course in November our family had to celebrate Thanksgiving! We had a wonderful Thanksgiving feast of McDonald's, Chick-Fil-A, Arby's, Wendy's, Bojangles, Taco Bell, and one gluten-free pizza. We mixed all the fries up from all the restaurants to make our mashed potatoes, and Gwen Gorman did an excellent job decorating the table so we could all sit down and enjoy a lovely family meal.

Salem Church is a family, and our youth are no different. We all have our differences, but I am thankful for my church, my time with all of these wonderful kids, and of course, my amazing volunteers. Youth Group would not be the same without each and every one of you! Thank you all for being such an important part of my life and journey with Christ!



Prayer Ministry

How is it already December?! It has been a good year for the Prayer Ministry team. We started by opening the Prayer Room two days a week and have been collaborating with Mt. Zion church to launch and operate Cafe Zion, where we share coffee, prayers and God's love with people waiting in the car line at Armstrong Elementary. We receive such a blessing fellowshiping with our Mt. Zion neighbors and fellow children of God as we work together to share God's love with those waiting in line for the school day to begin. We have started getting volunteers to pray during the Pastor's sermon in the Prayer Room on Sundays. A "Pray for Our Pastor" prayer guide has been developed and given to several shut-ins for them to assist the Prayer Ministry in covering our Pastor in prayer. We have made Prayer Request forms available to parents in the Preschool and after-school areas. Recently we began participating in Prayer and a Biscuit at Armstrong along with Mt. Zion which is just as it sounds - bringing biscuits and offering prayers to teachers, administrators and staff at the school. All this was done with one intent - to encourage prayer, that beautiful privilege and gift God has so graciously given us.

Psalm 116:2 (ESV) says, "Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live."

This from the Word gives me such hope and comfort. I can picture God on his throne in all his majesty, glory, and power and he hears us start to pray. He bends forward a bit and turns his ear in our direction so He can hear all our hurts, our fears, our wants, our needs, our questions, our praise, our big concerns, and our small concerns. He cares about all of them. What an awesome God we have!

Stay tuned for new prayer opportunities coming up! I am so thankful and grateful for everyone who has volunteered their time, ideas, and prayers in support of this ministry. You are very much appreciated.

Now the final prayer hack for 2023:

- Set an alarm on your phone: We pick up our phones during most of our spare moments throughout the day, so try setting an alarm, or several alarms, on your phone to pray; maybe include a meaningful scripture too. Let it be a quick reminder to spend those extra minutes during your day catching up with your Savior rather than scrolling through social media.

Salem Choir

Salem Chancel Choir is in full swing preparing for the Christmas season. November music included "Every Praise", "Gratitude Changes Everything" and "My God is Real" with Linda Wise, soprano.

We also sang "Every Praise" for the joint Thanksgiving service with area churches.

December will be exciting for the choir with our rehearsals for the Christmas Cantata, "Joy", the theme of our music for December. Our new choir member is Noel Reeves, and we have others coming to sing for the cantata.



Nursery

We are having a lot of new littles in the nursery, so we are very busy. We are always welcoming new volunteers to join in the fun. We also now offer nursery during Sunday School for parents who want to attend classes. Nursery will not be available on December 24 in order to give our staff and volunteers time off to be with their families.

Angel Tree

The Angel Tree is a great way that we can give to families in need during this season. Please email Jennifer Jackson with questions at jenniferejackson1978@gmail.com and she will assist you. If you would like to donate money for the Angel Tree and have someone else shop for you, that can also be arranged. Please note "Angel Tree" on the memo line of your check or on the envelope with your contribution. Don't forget that gifts are due to the office, wrapped with a tag attached by next Sunday, December 10th Thank you!

-Jennifer Jackson

Prayer Ministry of Mt. Zion and Salem **Café Zion in the Car Rider Line**

The first car came through at 1:54. We gave out 49 cups of hot chocolate - and this doesn't count the ones we drank when we were cleaning up! It was a very, very good hot chocolate mix. (I will ask Katie to order more for us as we used 2 of the 4 packets in the box of mix yesterday. We only gave out 7 bottles of water.)

We handed out 57 of the stuffed toy gifts for children and 23 of the small frisbees. Once the line started backing up, it was difficult to give out both or ask which one the parents thought the children would like. I didn't notice what time the last car came through, but we were finished and packed up a little after 3:00.

Three folks from Salem showed up; there were four "veterans" who I had asked, but three had doctor appointments for themselves or family members and one had a lingering cough that wouldn't go away. We had one new volunteer!

Although we could have used more helping hands and the day was quite chilly and windy, it was a wonderful afternoon! We had 21 prayer requests and 3 praise reports!

Praise Reports:

- A little girl thanked us for the stuffed animal.
- A young man expressed appreciation for us.
- I also had probably 4 or 5 people tell me how much they appreciated seeing us at the school; I just didn't record those encounters.

And the best one of all, Ms. K stopped in the parking lot after picking up her children. She got out of the car and told us that she usually was running late when we were out in the mornings but one morning, on Nov 9th, she had time to stop and get the coffee. She was so touched by our ministry and offer to pray for her that she called her mother when she got home. Her mother told her that was the 1st anniversary of her grandmother's death. Her grandmother was a devout Catholic and was always bringing her children, and then her grandchildren, to church when they were young. But as happens, her mother got busy with life and they stopped going to church.

Ms. K said she wasn't going to church with her children either but felt that our ministry was her grandmother's way of telling her she needed to get back to church, to seek the Lord. We joined hands with her and prayed over her. It was such a beautiful moment with the Holy Spirit in the midst!

The author of this article is Pat Lyons, who coordinates the prayer ministry of Salem Church. Please contact her for more ways you can be involved in prayer.

Contact Pat also for information on the next Café Zion prayer ministry date. Pat can be reached at sealyons1209@aol.com. Prayer Requests may be sent to cafezioneastover@gmail.com



Family Promise

Salem's Mission to Homeless Families

Salem's Winter Week of Service is Dec. 24-30.

Homeless women and children are enrolled in Family Promise of Cumberland County. Funds are requested for food (they cook), essentials, and utilities/insurance support for 14 folks - generally four families. Accountability from the staff is provided.

Mark contribution: FAMILY PROMISE.

Contact Debbie M for info.

Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Philippians 2:4

Juanita Warren Group

Thanksgiving is a time to give thanks for our many blessings. Extending those blessings to others is one of the missions of the Juanita Warren Women's Group.

Members delivered homemade chicken vegetable and vegetable beef soup to Salem's shut-ins during the week before Thanksgiving. Visits were made to brighten the day of those church members who are often unable to worship in our sanctuary and share in fellowship with friends and newcomers every Sunday. We hope to remind them that they are loved and remembered by the members of Salem Methodist Church. We want them to know that they are in our prayers and that they continue to have an impact on Salem.

During the Christmas season, take the time to remember those we may not see in the pews every Sunday, and pray for their happiness and well-being. Fill their mailboxes with Christmas wishes and reminders that God loves them, and so do we!

SCHOOLS SUPPLIES NEEDED

The Juanita Warren Group will be collecting school supplies for Armstrong Elementary School students throughout the month of January 2024. We did not do a supply drive at the beginning of the year because we felt there would be a greater need during the second half of the year. (At the beginning of the year there were many school supplies giveaways throughout the area, and supplies were drastically reduced at most retail stores, giving the students more opportunities to obtain things they needed for school.)

We appreciate your generosity and participation in this worthwhile effort. You can leave supplies in the office or you can make a monetary donation by designating your donation for "School Supplies."

Thank you so much for your help!
Bonnie Crabtree

Food Pantry

Thurs. Nov 9 & Thurs. Nov 16 Food Basket Blessings of Turkey & trimmings were gifted to twenty-two families; a total of 33 food packages were gifted on the above dates. The food pantry team has started shopping for Christmas gift food boxes.

A HUGE THANK YOU is sent from the recipients! THANK YOU Eastover Central Elem. School student council for donating foods & funds to Salem Food Pantry. All of our community partners are needed to provide for those in need, and Salem is blessed with several partners.

When your values are clear to you,
making decisions become easier.

Roy E. Disney



Prayer Requests

Pray for: Our Pastor, Our Military, Our
Shut-Ins, Our Schools, Our Church, Our
Country, Ukraine

Church Members

Cynthia Sheriff, Denise Rhodes (Duke Hospital), Helen Smith & Justin Smith, Lauren Marsh, Pat Lawrence, Del Peluso, Holden Hall, Dave Black, Cindy Gilliam White, Brenda Johnson, Tre Turpin, Judah Turpin, Peggy Allen, Thelma Bullard, John Butler, J.M. Butler, Rosine Dexter, Darvin & Edna Edwards, Derotha Fink, Wilma Gamble, Gilda Horne, Darlene Hovis, Weldon & Jeannette Hudson, Paula Johnson, Bruce & Lorraine Kirkwood, Mickey Kimbel, Lynn Kennedy, Jean Lugar, Sandy McDaniel, Jerry McLaurin, Mary Patterson, Trillma Pribbenow, Bill Roberts, Eula Snow, Norma Stackley, Ila Ruth Wise, Daniel and Nancy West.

Family and Friends

Elaine Vincent, Charles Godwin (CFVH), Linda Moore (CFVH), Barbara Oberdorf, Sara Piland(CFVH), Oswaldo Romas, Kaitlin Godwin, Ryan Godwin, Lawrence Deal, Curtis Matthew, Ponce McDonald, Mike Butler, Johnny Butler, Kim Gordner, Keith Cain, Sam Holt, Cecil Palmer, Sammy West, Delanoy Eva Hill, Ron Hardy, Herbert Bowden, Sarah Williamson, Lauren Creech, David Edwards, Clyde Salmon, Larry Johnson, Todd Reaves, Moises Soto, Larry Davis, Neil Ballentine, Jake Cole, Kristen Thomas, Erika Brigman, Phyllis Culbreth Steadman, Mac Howell, Berrae & Donna Meixsell, Wendy Caldwell, Kim Burrell, Selena Hurt, Patricia McLemore, Jorge Alvarez, Luz Aguilar, Bobby Coley, Sue Grissom, Karolyn Palush, Garland Slate, Laurie Barnes, Emily Dickson, Rebecca Hardin, Susan Jernigan, Kelly Stephens, Tim Lease, Jackson Woodcock, Kyle Powers, Charles Bullard, Frank Harris, Charlie Marpol, Nick and Jamie Smith, Deanna Tallon, Everna Worthen. Bruce Raynor, Larry Smith, Jonathan Lenore, Maria Gonzales, Janet Campbell, Margaret Ann Heine, Margaret Saccareccia, Jennifer Partney, Aaron Griffith, Brian Moxey, Chloe Creech, Helen Scoggins, Kelly, Anderson Stewart, Russell Varner, Clifton Faircloth, Jean Brown, Carrie Jones, Carolyn Ortero, Cale Johnson, Nick Wilson, Anthony Bethea, Sheila Minschew, Eddie Bowen, John Sange, Leslie Horne, Jason & Brittany Ray, Lin Wheeler, Angela Renfrow, Nelly Johnson, Vanessa Cuestas (cancer), Tabetha Priest, Marilyn Parkin, Rev. Jan (Poland Methodist Pastor), Matthew Johnson, Jr., Del Gray, Vickie Knoch, Sandra Jones, and Daniel Knox (cancer)

Memorials

Sue Melvin

Linda and Ian Wake, Henry and Amy Bowden, Herman and Doris Britt, Daphne and Russell Humphries, James and Mary Winchell, Nancy and Daniel West

Rhonda Smith

Karen Culbreth-Odom, Henry and Amy Bowden, Jimmy and Bonnie Crabtree, Helen Smith

Elizabeth Sykes

Ken and Claire Lynn Sykes

Ruth C. McLaurin

Edgar and Charlotte McLaurin

Financial Health

Budget Needed Monthly

\$ 44,166.00

Total November Offering & Tithes

\$ 41,236.14

November Building Fund Deposits

\$ 2,250.00

YTD Budget Needed

\$ 485,833.37

Year to Date Offering & Tithes

\$ 450,827.86

Year to Date Building Fund Deposits

\$ 15,305.00

Methodist Men

The Methodist Men's breakfast will be held on Sunday, December 17th at 8:00 am in the Dining Hall. All are welcome!

