

2023 Annual Report Salem Lutheran Church

January 28, 2024

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SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH ANNUAL MEETING AGENDA

January 28, 2024

Opening Devotion	Pastor Jon Brudvig
Approval of Minutes from Annual Congregational Meeting, January 29, 2023	Vance Thomas
Thanks & Recognitions	Vance Thomas
Review of 2023 Financials	Lynn Ross, Vance Thomas
Elections	Vance Thomas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Election of Church Council Members• Election of Endowment Committee Members• Election of 2024 Synod Assembly Delegates	
Presentation & Approval of 2024 Budget	Lynn Ross, Vance Thomas
New Business	Vance Thomas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stewardship• Strategic Visioning & Planning	
Adjourn with The Lord's Prayer	Vance Thomas

SALEM LUTHERAN CHURCH ANNUAL MEETING MINUTES

January 29, 2023

President Vance Thomas called the meeting to order at 11:48 am. Vance and Pastor Jon shared that hard copies of the Annual Report are not present at the start of this meeting, and are enroute to the seminary.

For the opening devotion, Pastor Jon read Psalm 25. As an additional part of the devotion, Pastor Jon shared that he reached out to Saturn Roop. With Saturn's permission, Pastor Jon shared Saturn's heart-felt reply letter with the congregation.

Vance confirmed that quorum is present. 38 are in attendance.

Approval of meeting minutes from Jan. 30, 2022:

Lynn Ross motioned to table this item until hard copies are present. Kathy Hellwege seconded the motion.

Thanks and Recognition:

Vance shared thanks for staff and outgoing council members and staff. He stated that without their commitment and service, we would not be where we are.

Vance presented a card and handmade crosses (made by mission partner Don Knudtson) to outgoing council members: Chris Hahn for completing a 1-year term on council and Tanya Trana for completing two three-year terms on council.

(6 years completed) — gifts from congregation presented to both

Tanya Trana also voiced thanks for Heather Lewis in her role as a parent volunteer this year organizing and leading youth activities.

Vance also lifted up thanks and recognition for Charlotte Wallenburg and Lisa Taylor as the outgoing parent youth volunteers.

Heather Lewis also gave thanks to the parents that are helping with youth and counted at least 10 different adults helping across Sunday school and other activities.

Vance also lifted up unnamed volunteers that assist with our community.

Return to the approval of meeting minutes from Jan. 30, 2022:

At this point in the meeting, the printed Annual Reports arrived. They were distributed and the assembly began with reviewing Annual Meeting minutes from last year to address this agenda item.

Paul Trana made a motion to accept the meeting minutes. Kathy Kostroske seconded the motion.

Vance opened the floor for questions and discussion.

Joyce Benedict opened discussion that on the second page, third paragraph of the meeting minutes that the statement for "Interest earned being reinvested" is not entirely accurate.

Lynn Ross confirmed that the Endowment Fund interest earnings are paid out quarterly.

Joyce Benedict clarified that the Meredith Fund is the fund where the interest earned on the fund is re-invested.

There was no need for a motion to correct previous minutes, as there is no question on the recording of the minutes. This clarification is added to this year's meeting notes.

Jennifer Thomas made a motion for the congregational meeting minutes to be accepted by voice vote.

Peggy Beerbohm seconded this motion.

Voice vote was taken and the minutes were approved.

The printed ballots were handed out at this time, which include an entry to vote on the ballot to approve/not approve the Annual Meeting minutes. Attendees were encouraged to also place their written ballot choice for this agenda item.

Review of 2022 financials:

Lynn Ross directed the assembly to Page 13 in the Annual Report.

Lynn reviewed the balance sheet on the level presented in the report.

Vance opened the floor for questions.

BJ Fevold raised a question for the downturn on funds to be addressed.

Lynn reviewed that all market values for funds, indicating any personal funds and also church-related funds, were affected this past year by the downturn in the market.

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Annual Meeting Minutes (cont.)

Lynn also stated that the General Fund was at \$0 at the end of 2022, which is not shown on the balance sheet.

Lynn recapped that all Hall Estate monies were used in 2022, and monies from Endowment checking were also used to supplement during the course of the year.

Looking at the balance sheet, the biggest difference in the balance sheet is the market value for the two funds.

She also shared that the end-of-year values for endowment funds were not available for the printed balance sheet.

Lynn continued by reviewing Page 14 for the income and expense statement.

Notable items mentioned include that the staff line is under budget due to a benefits election change.

The seminary use of facility is budgeted as rent under Buildings and Ground line item. The seminary use is paid out under Benevolence line item.

Lynn also mentioned that the Building Fund Project line is cash on hand set aside for items that may be needed for Koinonia Hall.

Lynn stated that \$8,562 was used for ministry needs from Meredith Fund.

Lynn also reviewed the self-funded budget lines with the assembly.

Lynn Ross made a motion to accept the 2022 financial results. Cindy Harmison seconded the motion. The assembly voted on the written ballot.

Additional slides:

Vance led the discussion on the review of the investment funds.

Joyce Benedict shared that the year-end values shown on this slide are \$39,000 more than what was printed on the Annual Report, as Annual Report data is compiled and printed before the year-end results are available.

Vance presented the Offering Trends slide and led the discussion here. The graph shows a timeline of offering trends from January 2019 through December 2022, which was also shown at the Town Hall meetings the week prior. The slide shows two points of data: monthly giving and a 12-month rolling average. The graph covers a timeline history including the sale of the buildings in Lenexa, Pastor Dave Whetter departing Salem and joining synod staff, COVID-19 pandemic and interim pastor on staff, and Pastor Jon Brudvig joining Salem. The leveling off of offerings since May 2021 aligns with Pastor Jon's start with Salem and the community stabilizing their offering gifts.

Jarred Schubert raised a couple questions. Does this graph show a lot of change per household or decrease in number of households or both? What does the future hold?

Vance's reply indicated that he hopes the line remains stable. There are some indications that there may be a slight uptick, but this is unknown since the stewardship campaign has not started nor do we know how inflation affects household giving.

Vance also indicated the primary loss has been in the number of giving units.

He clarified the decline is not per-household giving. The decline is loss of households or units giving.

Paul Trana questioned what a timeline graph of membership overlaid with this Offering Trends graph would show? Would that be similar view?

Vance indicated there is a possible, reasonable correlation between those two items.

Heather Lewis shared that weekly attendance has gone up through the last year and that a possible overlay of attendance would show an uptick for end of 2022.

Elections:

Vance led the discussion that council members Dave Bowen and Lorel Brown are returning to complete terms.

Based on a 9-member council, there are currently 7 vacancies, but we are only looking only to fill 5 vacancies. This is the target based on a future change to the model constitution that proposes a target of a 7-member council.

Joyce Benedict, Jared Heald, Taylor Schubert, and Vance Thomas were presented as names for open council positions and are listed names on the ballot.

Lynn Ross moved to accept slate of candidates for council members. Larry Beerbohm seconded the motion. The assembly voted for council members on the printed ballot.

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Annual Meeting Minutes (cont.)

Vance led the discussion on the election of Endowment Committee members. Jen Beutel is rolling off after completing a 3-year term. The current and returning members of the committee are Dave Edeal and Tim Rehder. Greg Beutel has volunteered for the vacant position.

Joyce Benedict made a motion to accept Greg Beutel as member of the Endowment Committee. Paul Trana seconded the motion. The assembly voted for the endowment member vacancy on the printed ballot.

Vance led the discussion on the election of the 2023 Synod Assembly delegates. This year, it is an online assembly that will take place on Saturday, June 4, 2023 from 9 am to 3 pm. Lynn Ross has volunteered as an adult delegate. There is still a need for the following three openings: One additional adult, one youth position (youth does not need to be confirmed), and one alternate.

Paula Hahn made a motion to confirm volunteer names and to allow council to appoint as needed. Joyce Benedict seconded the motion. The assembly voted on the printed ballot or these items.

Presentation and Approval of the 2023 Budget:
Lynn Ross led the discussion on the Presentation and Approval of the 2023 Budget. Page 14 of the Income and Expense Statement lists the 2023 Annual Budget column. Lynn Ross made a motion to accept the 2023 budget. Peggy Beerbohm seconded the motion.

In open discussion, Bob Roediger commented that the key to any budget is the members. He voiced that Commitment with a capital C is needed, whether that is time, talent, or money. He is not here to dictate anyone's commitment, but stated that we as congregation need to make our commitments and stick to those commitment. Sticking to our commitments is the key to the success of the offering graph previously shown.

Vance shared that the pledges report for pledge amounts received in 2022 came in over pledged amounts by 10%.

Vance also pointed out the adjustment of offering income intentionally reduced on the budget, when compared to the 2022 budget. While there is no expected decrease in giving, the Contribution Income line was adjusted down to reflect a more accurate expectation to be more consistent with actual giving over the past few years. In reviewing the overall expenses, there was a reduction in total expenses of \$20,000 when comparing 2022 to 2023. This reduction puts the budget in line with the actuals of 2022.

It was also shared that Benevolence tithing percentage was reduced from 8.5% to 6.5%. This was done to keep spending in line and was not an easy decision to make. It was clarified that monies paid to the seminary are not included as part of 6.5% of Benevolence.

Also as noted at the Town Hall last week, the 2023 budget does not include staff raises at this time. Last week and again today it was mentioned that if council observes increase in giving in 3 to 6 months down the road, council can review and take action to decide if compensation changes could be addressed.

BJ Fevold raised some discussion questions on the budget, outlining that it shows a \$51,000 deficit, and asked what is the expectation there? More income? If we don't have more income, then what's the plan? How did we account for last year's deficit?

Vance replied to the question on last year's budget deficit, stating that budgeted monies were used from the endowment checking account first, used budgeted monies in all the Hall Estate, and that Thrivent account monies were also used.

Lynn Ross replied that for the 2023 budget, plans are to use the quarterly interest payments from endowment (which will be approximately \$20,000) plus excess funds in the endowment checking (but always sure to leave a base \$20,000 in the Endowment Fund checking account). Ministry will still spend out of the Meredith Fund. The expectation is to withdraw from the Meredith Fund to pay for ministries, as previously planned.

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Annual Meeting Minutes (cont.)

BJ Fevold also brought the discussion point for staff raises, sharing that a 3% raise is \$6,600 as calculated against the budget and doesn't cover inflation. If we are already at \$51,000 deficit, what's another \$6,600?

BJ Fevold made a motion to amend the 2023 budget to include 3% increase for staff salaries. Cindy Harmison seconded the motion.

Vance continued by offering up the opportunity for any further discussion.

A question was raised if there was a need for an amendment to allow council to give more raises later? It was confirmed this kind of amendment does not need voting by the congregation and is at council's discretion.

Joyce Benedict voiced that she is not opposed to staff raises.

The deficit could be reduced to about \$25,000 using Thrivent fund dollars.

The only way to cover the deficit is to then withdraw capital from Endowment Fund or increase giving.

Lynn Ross voiced that a 10% increase giving would cover the cost of the raises.

Discussion ended and there was a voice vote to accept the 2023 proposed budget as amended with staff raises.

The voice vote was a majority vote to accept the amended budget with one vote to abstain.

The motion passed voice vote.

The assembly also then voted via printed ballot to approve the 2023 proposed budget as amended.

New Business:

Constitution changes:

The ELCA Model Constitution has had a number of changes, and those changes have been forwarded to our congregation by the synod. Those changes are being reviewed the constitution review team, comprised of Cindy Harmison, Jen Thomas, Lorel Brown, and Pastor Jon Brudvig.

After the team has completed their work, council will receive the edits from the review team. This will be a discussion for the congregation in a future, separate congregational meeting.

Strategic Visioning and Planning:

A list of 11 core values has been distributed to solicit feedback.

Council has received feedback to incorporate.

Vance explained the next steps in this process.

There will be a separate congregational meeting to vote on core values.

The congregation will vote on their top three choices.

From the list of three, the top four will be identified.

From that list of core values, mission and vision statements will be reviewed.

Strategic planning can begin and will include processes around building needs.

Cindy Harmison raised a question on how long is the lease here at the seminary?

Vance replied that it is year to year. Pastor Jon also shared that a 90-day notice to vacate required by either party — seminary and Salem.

Joyce Benedict commented that the slide show for the Annual Meeting also included slides that are not part of the Annual Report. She indicated that a printed copy of slides shown in the meeting, but not included in the Annual Report, should be available for the assembly.

Stewardship:

As a new council begins their year, there will be the development of a stewardship theme and program. In addition, there is a need to develop and build out a Stewardship Team, a team that exists year-round, not created just to lead a stewardship drive. There is a desired focus on being responsible with the gifts God has given us, but lifting this up throughout the year and not just a focus on one or two events in the year.

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Annual Meeting Minutes (cont.)

There are ideas on strategies around stewardship, such as a challenge grant for matching funds. Initial target for 2023 is how to help and encourage new givers to state their intents or to increase their giving intents, with a secondary focus on helping irregular givers become regular givers.

Adjourn with The Lord's Prayer:

Lynn Ross made a motion to adjourn at 1:05 pm. Paul Trana seconded the motion. The assembly closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Addendum:

Ballot voting results were tabulated after the meeting adjourned.

The following results were communicated to the assembly via email on 01/30/2023.

Thirty-eight ballots were received and counted during the Annual Meeting.

Here are the voting results. After each indicated ballot question, the voting results are indicated as "PASSED" or "FAILED," with the ballot count included in parentheses in order of "yes" / "no" / "abstention." The voting results are as follows:

An initial motion was made to conduct a voice vote for the approval of the 2022 Annual Congregational Meeting minutes; the motion was seconded. The motion passed unanimously via voice vote.

On the question to approve the minutes of the Annual Congregational Meeting from January 30, 2022: PASSED (unanimous voice vote)

On the question to accept the 2022 Financial Results as presented: PASSED (37 / 0 / 1)

On the election of Church Council Member(s):

Joyce Benedict: PASSED (38 / 0 / 0)

Jared Heald: PASSED (38 / 0 / 0)

Taylor Schubert: PASSED (38 / 0 / 0)

Vance Thomas: PASSED (38 / 0 / 0)

On the election of Endowment Committee Members:

Greg Beutel: PASSED (37 / 0 / 1)

On the election of 2023 Synod Assembly Delegates:

Lynn Ross: PASSED (37 / 0 / 1)

On the question to allow Church Council to appoint additional 2023 Synod Assembly Delegates as needed: PASSED (37 / 0 / 1)

During the Annual Meeting, as the 2023 proposed budget was being discussed, an amendment was proposed to add a 3% increase for staff salaries. The amendment was seconded and passed by a unanimous voice vote with one abstention.

On the question to approve the 2023 Annual Budget as amended to include the 3% increase for staff salaries: PASSED (37 / 0 / 1)

Pastor's Annual Report

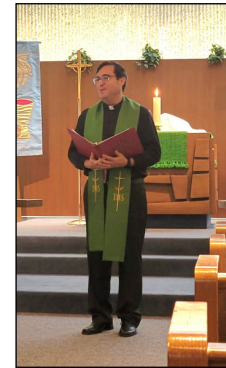
Then the LORD called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again." So he went and lay down. The LORD called again, "Samuel!" Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call, my son; lie down again..." The LORD called Samuel again, a third time. And he got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli perceived that the LORD was calling the boy. Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'"

*Now the LORD came and stood there, calling as before, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant is listening."
— 1 Samuel 3:4-5, 6-10*

Dear Mission Partners,

During the time after Epiphany, we encounter lectionary texts that proclaim words of promise and invitation — the promise of God's abiding presence in our lives and the invitation extended to all the baptized to participate in God's reconciling and renewing mission for all creation.

That is why the text from 1 Samuel 3 seems appropriate for this year's Annual Report. During an uncertain time when the people of Israel were fighting off attacks from hostile neighbors and religious leaders struggled to see God's presence, God showed up unexpectedly, repeatedly calling out to Samuel, a child serving in the House of the Lord at Shiloh.



Surprisingly, God does not call upon Eli, the elderly priest, but instead calls out to the child sleeping near the ark of the covenant. Though God recognizes Samuel's gifts for ministry, Samuel does not yet understand. He requires the assistance of another to discern God's calling.

After returning to Eli a third time, the nearly blind Eli finally "sees" that the Lord is speaking to the child. Then, instead of sulking or wondering why God is not calling out to him, Eli prepares Samuel to live into his calling, instructing the child, "Go, lie down ... if the Lord calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'"



How many of us have asked the same thing this past year? "Speak, Lord! Please, Lord, show us the way. Tell us where to go." Yet, unlike the young child who listened when God spoke, we more often than not prefer to do the talking, telling God what we think we need or making it clear how we expect God should act on our behalf.

It is only natural, especially considering all that happened this past year after receiving word shortly after Easter that we would need to locate a new space for worship, then transitioning ninety days later from Central Seminary to a temporary location at Lenexa United Methodist Church, and then relocating once again to our current worship location at Overland Park Lutheran Church.



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Pastor's Annual Report (cont.)

Looking back, however, God was in the storm, speaking to us amid the chaos of change, guiding our community through difficult adaptive challenges, lifting up leaders in our community, connecting us with ecumenical and Lutheran partners, and equipping us for ministries that reach out in loving service to our neighbors in need through Salem's diverse outreach ministries, ongoing faith-formation ministries, and our commitment to working for justice here in Johnson County and in far-flung places like Papua New Guinea, Russia, and Guatemala. God is at work among us as we help alleviate the food insecurity of our neighbors, deliver meals, repair homes, and share generously our gifts of time, talent, and treasure.



The story of Samuel's call highlights the reality that none of our ministries would be possible without the support and dedication of the many mission partners who have also responded to God's call. Together we are the church for the sake of the world. None of us can do this work alone. And neither could Jesus. Ours is an invitational God who invites and equips people of all ages and varying abilities, people from all walks of life, and sends us out to participate in the building up of God's kingdom in the places we live, worship, work, study, and play.

Yes, we are a spirit-empowered community, but sometimes we lose our way. When life throws us unexpected curveballs it is easy to "forget" that Jesus promises to send the Holy Spirit to empower and sustain us in the ministries to which God has called us (John 16:12-15). "This is especially true," notes Mark Hanson, former presiding bishop of the ELCA, "when we describe the church on the basis of what we lack and have lost and nostalgically long for the days gone by."

The path forward into the future that God has prepared for us begins with a posture of listening. Listening deeply to the promises spoken to God's people throughout the scriptures. Listening to the ways that God is inviting, cajoling, and moving us into a future that we may not yet fully discern. Listening to the voices of our oldest and youngest mission partners and to those who may feel that their insights have been ignored or unappreciated. Prayerful, active listening holds the key to discerning how God is inviting us as a community to steward the gifts that the Holy Spirit has entrusted to us for the sake of the gospel and furthering God's mission for the world.

While I do not know what the future may hold for Salem, I trust with every fiber of my being that God IS at work in, through, and among us — connecting us with our neighbors, guiding us into new and exciting partnerships for ministry, and calling forth the gifts of all the baptized.

"Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening."

In Christ's Peace,
Pastor Jon



Pastor's Annual Report (cont.)

OFFICIAL ACTS FOR 2023 Salem Lutheran Church January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023

BAPTISMS: 1

1. Maleigha Sue Davis, April 9, 2023, Pr. Jon Brudvig presiding

AFFIRMATION OF BAPTISM/CONFIRMATION: 1

1. Renee Leanne Mitchell

NEW MISSION PARTNERS RECEIVED: 6

1. Pat Semb
2. George Semb
3. Juan Quesada
4. Kellie Quesada
5. Clara Quesada
6. Camille Quesada

RITE OF FIRST COMMUNION: 6

1. Cainan Kirby
2. Kinsley Konen
3. Stephen Hyde Mannen
4. Samuel Mitchell
5. Abram Rasdall
6. Charlotte Shaneyfelt

DEATHS (mission partners): 2

1. Jim Jones (February 26, 2023)
2. Ilene Callstrom (May 25, 2023)

FUNERAL SERVICES: 2

1. Hatsue "Amy" Kostroske, January 29, 2023, at the Baugh-Marshall Chapel, Central Seminary, Shawnee, KS
2. Ilene Callstrom, June 2, 2023, at Park Lawn Funeral Home, Kansas City, MO

TRANSFERS OUT TO ELCA CONGREGATIONS: 4

1. Jim Roy
2. Amy Roy
3. Chris Hahn
4. Paula Hahn

INSTALLATIONS: February 5, 2022 — Council Members

Congregational Council President's Report

To all the saints in Christ Jesus of Salem Lutheran (sisters, brothers, and all siblings together):
Grace and peace from the triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

As some may know, one of my favorite phrases in scripture is the short expression that concludes John 1:46. Upon hearing Nathanael's skepticism regarding the person of Jesus of Nazareth, Philip says to Nathanael, "Come and see." It is a simple invitation that hides deep possibilities. It is very much how I feel about the community of Salem as well. There is an unassuming simplicity and candor to this community that hides a deep faith, a gentle openness, and a curious spirit. In our individual and collective work together, I hear the echoes of Philip: come and see what God is doing.

2023 was an exciting year for council members. Following the elections at the Annual Meeting in January, Salem's council consisted of six individuals: Joyce Benedict, Dave Bowen, Lorel Brown, Jared Heald, Taylor Schubert, and myself. In April, George Semb joined Salem's council with the acceptance of a one-year appointment. This has been a very strong group of individuals providing leadership during a challenging year. Dave Bowen will be cycling off of council with the conclusion of the 2024 Annual Meeting. Dave, I appreciate your openness to serving and your questioning spirit. It has been a privilege serving on council with you.



The spring included presentation of a list of core values and the congregation's vote to identify which of the values listed were most representative of Salem as a community. As a result of that process, we identified the following values: Christ-centered, community and fellowship, service, and worship and music.

Perhaps the most significant episode of the past year, though, was the relocation of Salem to begin worshipping at Overland Park Lutheran Church (OPLC). Salem was notified by Central Seminary at the end of April that our facility use agreement was being terminated, and our use of the seminary chapel and library would end in July. Not surprisingly, this generated a great deal of concern and anxiety for the congregation, but Salem was able to shift gears nimbly. A property scout team composed of five members of the congregation and Pastor Jon was quickly formed, and the team set about the immediate task of looking for opportunities. The result of the excellent work of this team was the identification of Overland Park Lutheran Church as a partner for sharing worship space. After spending the month of August worshipping at Lenexa United Methodist Church (at their invitation), we had our first regular Sunday worship at OPLC on Sunday, Sept. 10. Worship times have shifted slightly later than they have been previously, but I am happy to say that it appears Sunday mornings have achieved a comfortable (and comforting) degree of regularity in the months since arriving at OPLC.

In addition to the property scout team, appreciation needs to be expressed to our hosts at OPLC and our fellow workers in the vineyard from Overland Park Presbyterian Church (OPPC). Both communities have been receptive and welcoming of Salem, and I am deeply thankful for these two communities willing to take the risk of adding a new roommate into the mix. I am also thankful to the people of Salem, for not losing hope, for your tenacity and your courage to stand with our community of faith during these turbulent months.

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Congregational Council President's Report (cont.)

As we look to the year ahead, Salem's council continues to explore the strategic visioning process for Salem and how it will guide us into the future. The next steps in this process will include discussions about Salem's mission statement and possibly a vision statement. Similarly, Salem will have an opportunity to review and adopt an updated congregational constitution. More information will be provided as these activities get closer.

And a word of thanks must always be offered to our staff and pastor for their leadership and service. Staff members Heather Lewis, Shari Van Baale, Laura Cooper, Toni Graham, Ruby Hsu, Danlei Yang, and Luke Carr have provided much-needed steady service and leadership throughout the year. And, of course, Pastor Jon Brudvig continues to guide us and remind us that God is with us, especially amid all the chaos. To each of you, I say thank you. It is an honor to work with each one of you.

Looking forward to 2024, I expect our community to continue moving forward, confident of the grace, mercy, and love of God's abiding promises. Please continue to pray for one another and for our community as we move ahead into God's abundant future for us. Come and see.

With gratitude and joy,
Vance M. Thomas
2023 Salem Lutheran Church Council President

Council Candidates Bios

George Semb

My wife, Patricia, and I joined Salem Lutheran Church two years ago. We have been spiritually uplifted by the wonderful music, people, ministry, and messages. I look forward to working with Salem's Church Council. I currently serve as a member of the investment committee for Leawood Venture Capital, teach part-time at the University of Kansas, and am on the investment committee for Johnson County Community College's endowment fund. I spent 37 years at the University of Kansas, where I designed instructional systems for both college classrooms and Navy on-the-job training. My business background includes founding and managing an educational software development company and serving on the boards of both public companies and non-profit organizations.



AMONG OUR PEOPLE

	2023	2022
Member Households	128 (6 inactive)	129 (5 inactive)
Baptized Members	305	303
Confirmed Members	245	244
Students Confirmed	0	6
1st Communion Students	6	1
Weddings Performed	0	2
Memorial Services	1	1
<i>Attendance Information:</i>		
Avg. Weekly Attendance (in-person)	83 (170 out of 305 participated in worship)	66 (205 out of 316 participated in worship)
Avg. Weekly Attendance (online)	95	100
Ash Wednesday	55	51
Avg. Lenten Service	attendance not recorded	attendance not recorded
Maundy Thursday	33 in person, 93 online	40
Good Friday	51 in person, 106 online	93
Easter Sunday	In-person:53 trad.,119 cont. Online: 72 trad., 69 cont.	In-person:55 trad.,101 cont. Online: 70 trad., 66 cont.
Avg. Advent Service	attendance not recorded	attendance not recorded
Christmas Eve	7:30 p.m. service: in person:72, online: 69	In-person:5pm:56,7:30pm:85 Online: 5pm:181,7:30pm 202
<i>Members Received</i>		
Baptized	1 member	3 members
Affirmations	1 confirmed	6 confirmed
Transfer In	0	1 confirmed
Re-instated	0	0
<i>Members Released</i>		
Transfer Out	4	4
Removals / Withdrawals	0	0
Deaths	2 adults	2 adults
Adjustments to Records	0	0

Salem Lutheran Church
Balance Sheet
Consolidated - December 2023

	Current Year	Previous Year
ASSETS		
BANK ACCOUNTS		
CHECKING ACCOUNTS		
BMO CHECKING ACCOUNT		
General Fund - Restricted	\$462.01	\$731.86
Pr Discretionary Checking	2,011.45	2,690.04
Design Team Checking	138.83	138.83
Endowment Fund Checking	2,349.13	26,920.79
Building Fund Checking	12,916.71	15,192.09
Mem Fund General Checking	1,105.65	1,105.65
Mem Scholarship Ckng	125.91	125.91
Mem Ministry Ckng	96.04	396.04
Mem Facility Ckng	1,369.08	1,378.91
Thrivent Choice Ckng	1,898.55	3,859.00
Pantry Pack Checking	23,104.22	16,919.16
Pantry Pack-Restricted Ch	23,851.32	0.00
Children's Budget Ckng	146.00	146.00
Teen Budget Checking	35.00	30.00
Teen Fundraising Checking	1,465.65	1,715.90
Salem Sister's Checking	680.43	820.03
Salem' Men's Checking	82.21	182.21
Altar Guild Checking	274.57	0.00
Altar Guild - Restricted	648.68	648.68
KC Service Netwrk Ckng	197.42	197.42
Hope Builders Ckng	200.00	200.00
Meredith Ministry Checkin	24,858.67	7,634.98
Subtotal Bmo Checking Account	98,017.53	81,033.50
Subtotal Checking Accounts	98,017.53	81,033.50
SAVINGS ACCOUNTS		
Thrivent - Mission Fund	10,400.00	10,400.00
Thrivent - Building Fund	22,303.26	19,915.22
Subtotal Savings Accounts	32,703.26	30,315.22
Subtotal Bank Accounts	130,720.79	111,348.72
INVESTMENTS		
ENDOWMENT FUNDS		
ENDOWMENT FUND OF ELCA	586,603.96	542,556.37
MEREDITH MINISTRY FUND	175,660.67	178,220.72
Subtotal Investments	762,264.63	720,777.09
TOTAL ASSETS	\$892,985.42	\$832,125.81
FUND BALANCE		
Fund Balance	\$892,985.42	\$832,125.81
TOTAL EQUITY	892,985.42	832,125.81
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$892,985.42	\$832,125.81

Salem Lutheran Church
Income and Expense Statement

Consolidated SUMMARY - December 2023

	2023 Actuals Year to Date	2023 Annual Budget	2023 YTD Budget Difference	2022 Actuals YTD	2024 Annual Budget
INCOME					
CONTRIBUTION INCOME	\$229,103.09	\$240,000.00	(10,896.91)	\$235,736.69	\$255,000.00
DESIGNATED CONTRIBUTIONS	\$52,563.97	\$800.00	51,763.97	\$13,339.21	\$400.00
INVESTMENT INCOME (LOSS)	92,897.74	20,000.00	72,897.74	-145,508.24	20,000.00
TOTAL INCOME	374,564.80	260,800.00	113,764.80	103,567.66	275,400.00
EXPENSES					
FIXED EXPENSES					
PASTORAL STAFF	\$109,240.11	\$110,050.50	810.39	\$108,903.66	\$112,889.02
SUPPORT STAFF	98,392.85	98,337.88	(54.97)	93,127.91	105,711.81
ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSE	19,512.91	21,500.00	1,987.09	21,145.63	21,124.00
BUILDING & GROUNDS	32,515.63	37,550.00	5,034.37	31,062.80	40,300.00
BUILDING FUND PROJECTS	2,052.96	15,192.09	13,139.13	0.00	9,516.71
Subtotal Fixed Expenses	261,714.46	282,630.47	20,916.01	254,240.00	289,541.54
MEMORIAL GIFT NAME	309.83	0.00	(309.83)	2,679.07	0.00
STEWARDSHIP	320.97	0.00	(320.97)	0.00	0.00
COUNCIL	0.00	500.00	500.00	0.00	500.00
BENEVOLENCE	17,769.00	16,900.00	(869.00)	23,845.00	17,875.00
THRIVENT CHOICE	2,575.45	0.00	(2,575.45)	0.00	0.00
PANTRY PACK	12,023.62	0.00	(12,023.62)	4,791.75	0.00
NURSERY	0.00	200.00	200.00	0.00	100.00
CHILDREN'S MINISTRIES	962.38	750.00	(212.38)	558.36	750.00
VBS	0.00	1,600.00	1,600.00	821.37	1,600.00
TEEN MINISTRY	7,244.44	5,000.00	(2,244.44)	6,585.01	7,000.00
SALEM SISTERS	299.60	0.00	(299.60)	0.00	0.00
MEN'S MINISTRY	100.00	0.00	(100.00)	100.00	0.00
ALTAR GUILD	1,046.81	900.00	(146.81)	1,512.79	1,000.00
WORSHIP & MUSIC	2,810.52	3,000.00	189.48	2,413.45	3,500.00
FELLOWSHIP / EVANGELISM	1,470.15	1,800.00	329.85	1,608.56	1,800.00
OUTREACH	3,372.57	1,850.00	(1,522.57)	7,199.69	1,850.00
OUTREACH MISSION MINISTRY	828.00	0.00	(828.00)	0.00	7,000.00
CONFERENCES & CONVENTION	375.00	1,100.00	725.00	987.20	800.00
GENERAL MINISTRY EXPENSE	482.39	450.00	(32.39)	571.74	600.00
Subtotal Ministries	51,990.73	34,050.00	-17,940.73	53,673.99	44,375.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	313,705.19	316,680.47	2,975.28	307,913.99	333,916.54
EXCESS INCOME/EXPENSES	60,859.61	(55,880.47)	110,789.52	(204,346.33)	(58,516.54)
Less Cash on Hand					0.00
Endowment Fund Checking			Dec. Bal		2,349.13
Building Fund Checking			2,349.13		2,349.13
Meredith Ministry Checking			12,916.71		12,916.71
			24,858.67		19,200.00
Cash Flow Balance					(24,050.70)
Additional Resources:					
Thrivent Choice Checking	1,898.55				
Thrivent Savings Accounts	32,703.26				
Endowment Fund	586,603.96				
Meredith Invested Fund	175,660.67				
	<u>796,866.44</u>				

SALEM MINISTRY TEAM CHART

SERVE THE WORLD – Outreach (Council Partners – Taylor Schubert and Lorel Brown)

- o **Outreach Team (OPEN)** – coordinate street teams and other outreach events
- o **Gathering Table Meal (Lorel Brown)**: meal ministry outreach program with partner church
- o **Pantry Pack (OPEN)**: preparing/distributing packs to feed the hungry
- o **Meal Ministry (Peggy Beerbohm)**: providing meals for shut-ins and those affected by illness or a family death
- o **Visitation Ministry (OPEN)**: bringing fellowship and provide communion to those unable to attend weekly ministry at Salem
- o **Meals on Wheels (OPEN)**: providing volunteers for Jo Co and Olathe
- o **Good Faith Network (Renee Loya)**: interfaith network of faith communities in Johnson County
- o **HopeBUILDERS (B.J. Fevold)**: Volunteers offer home repair assistance and help homeowners regain hope that their community cares about them

ADMIN – Staff, Property, Finance (Council Partner – Vance Thomas)

- o **Building & Grounds Maintenance (Mike Dougherty)**: providing ongoing maintenance for all Salem buildings and grounds, managing all current and future maintenance contracts
- o **Long-Term Maintenance & Improvements (OPEN)**: providing a long-term vision for maintenance and improvements of the Salem Campus
- o **Capital Improvements (OPEN)**: creating long-range plans for capital improvements
- o **Finance Team (Lynn Ross)**: managing the current and future financial needs of Salem
- o **Stewardship Team (Jen Thomas)**: inspiring our congregation to share their gifts with the world
- o **Benevolence (Bob Roediger)**: gathering and directing congregational resources to make a difference
- o **Communication & Technology Team (Shari Van Baale)**: creating effective and inspiring communication to Salem and beyond
- o **Volunteer Coordinator (OPEN)**: works with staff to fill volunteer needs
- o **Past Presidents (Jen Beutel)**: former council presidents to address specific long-range needs
- o **Human Resources Team (OPEN)**: managing the current and future staffing needs of Salem
- o **Endowment Committee (Greg Beutel)**: managing use of Endowment Fund, from which distributions are made for ministry
- o **Pastor (Mutual Ministry Team)**: works with the pastor to anticipate and to respond to ministry needs and opportunities

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SALEM MINISTRY TEAM CHART (cont.)

ENCOUNTERING GOD - Worship (Council Partner – Dave Bowen and George Semb)

- o **Worship Development (Heather Lewis):** creating inspirational and meaningful worship
- o **Altar Care (Paula Dougherty):** preparing and presenting the sacramental elements for worship
- o **Worship Volunteers (Heather Lewis):** recruiting, training, and scheduling all worship volunteers
- o **Music Ministry (Heather Lewis):** creating musical opportunities for all ages
- o **Design Team (Steve Wise):** inspiring the congregation by preserving and enhancing the facilities

GROW IN FAITH - Education (Council Partner – Jared Heald and Joyce Benedict)

- o **Advent & Lenten Wednesday Meals (Heather Lewis):** providing food and fellowship through festival seasons
- o **Salem Café (Jarred Schubert):** providing food and hospitality on Sunday mornings
- o **Mission Partner Lunch & Reception (OPEN):** providing food and fellowship for new members
- o **Fellowship Events (Jarred Schubert):** creating opportunities for all ages to share in community
- o **Small Group Ministries (Jarred Schubert):** creating opportunities for small groups to share in community
- o **Children's Ministry (Lorel Brown):** creating ministry opportunities for pre-K through 5th grade children and families
- o **Student Ministry (Heather Lewis):** creating ministry opportunities for 6th- through 12th-grade students and families
- o **Safe Sanctuary (Cindy Harmison):** creating policies and procedures to safeguard our children and volunteers
- o **Women's Ministry: creating meaningful opportunities for adult women**
 - o **Fellowship of the Vine (Angela Osheim & Chris Wise):** building friendship through social events
 - o **Book Club (Kathy Kostroske):** reading and discussion of all types of literature
 - o **Thursday Morning Bible Study (Cheryl Padgett & Joyce Benedict):** weekly study and discussion
- o **Men's Ministry: creating meaningful opportunities for adult men**
 - o **Men's Breakfast (Greg Beutel):** monthly meeting for fellowship/breakfast
 - o **DABS – Dudes Afraid Bible Study (OPEN):** exploring faith and enjoying fellowship
 - o **Fellowship of the Stein (Steve Wise):** building friendship through social events at a variety of breweries and restaurants
- o **Salem Seniors (Terry Love):** creating meaningful ministry opportunities for those over 50
- o **Adult Education (OPEN):** opportunities for adults to enrich faith

2022 MINISTRY TEAM HIGHLIGHTS

Administrative

Finance Team

The Finance Team's objectives are to report on Salem's financial results; ensure financial policies are adhered to, including the management of designated funds; and making recommendations to leaders regarding financial resources. We work with teams as they set goals and budgets for ministries and operations. We are fortunate to have dedicated volunteers to keep Salem moving forward in regard to finances.



Every week, offering counters accurately record the offering and make sure the deposit is made. Many thanks to Joyce Benedict, Dave Bowen, David Hellwege, Ryan Konen, Jarred Schubert, and Tanya Trana for serving in this vital way.

Our treasurer, Joyce Benedict, and financial secretary, Janice VanLaningham, each spend several hours a week ensuring financial records of expenditures and contributions are complete and correct. These volunteers are absolutely indispensable.

Many thanks to Joyce Benedict, Janice VanLaningham, Ryan Konan, Scot Harmison, our council partner Vance Thomas, and Pastor Jon for serving on the Finance Team in 2023.

— Submitted by Lynn Ross

Benevolence

In 2023 we continued to give part of our offering to benevolence.

The following was a representative of our giving:

Hollis Renewal Center.....	\$1,000
Designated benevolence.....	\$1,104
ELCA.....	\$13,162
Gathering Table.....	\$1,690
Local benevolence.....	\$213
Fuller Center for Housing.....	\$600
<hr/>	
Total.....	\$17,769

Thank you for your giving.

— Submitted by Bob Roediger and the Benevolence Team

Administrative (cont.)

Stewardship

Team members: Lorel Brown, Jen Thomas, Pastor Jon Brudvig

In June we asked for Statements of Intent through the remainder of 2023, and then we organized a month of temple talks, a stewardship litany, and a Commitment Sunday.

On Sunday, Nov. 12, mission partners brought forward their Statements of Intent for 2024. Results for 2024: 37 pledges for a total of \$187,980. Compared with 2023: 37 pledges for \$142,890.

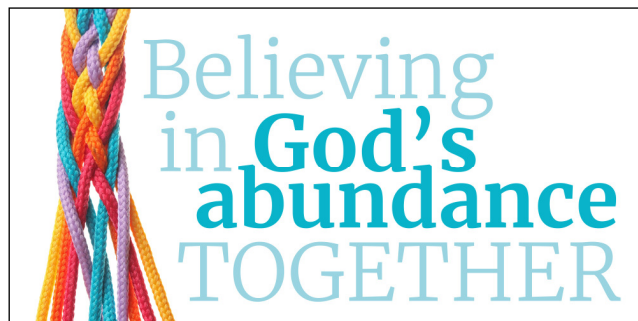
In addition to this commitment, mission partners enjoyed a potluck meal between services and we welcomed our siblings from Overland Park Lutheran Church and Overland Park Presbyterian Church. I'd like to thank the Fellowship Team for their help with the potluck, especially Chris and Steve Wise, Cheryl Padgett, and Tanya and Paul Trana.

Thank you to the following mission partners for their temple talks and leadership: Greg Beutel, Lynn Ross, Renee Loya, and Vance Thomas.

Thank you to Lorel for the graphics and to the staff for supporting our communications.

Our next activity for the congregation will be a time and talent survey and litany adjacent to the Annual Meeting in January 2024 to highlight the multiple ways that mission partners share Christ's light with the congregation and the larger community.

— *Submitted by Jennifer Thomas*



Worship Ministries

Director of Worship and Music *Heather Lewis*

Once again, I am amazed at the strength and resilience of our church family after yet another year of “blooming where we’re planted!” We began a lovely season of Lent with midweek services of *Unfailing Light*. Fourteen youth did a dramatic reading of the passion on Palm Sunday, and Maundy Thursday was meaningful and fun with six Salem kids taking their first communion. Good Friday’s tenebrae *In Your Hands* was beautiful with the choir and our candlelit cross, and Easter was full of joy, bringing trumpet back for the first time since before the pandemic.



After celebrating our graduates, Mother’s Day, and the end of Sunday school, we spent our last two months in the Baugh-Marshall Chapel at Central Seminary, and at the end of July were warmly welcomed by Lenexa UMC for five weeks in a lovely worship space in their preschool building. We continued our traditional and contemporary services, and enjoyed being right across the parking lot from Koinonia Hall.



On Sept. 10 we began a new collaboration with Overland Park Lutheran and Overland Park Presbyterian churches: all three congregations share OPLC’s worship, Sunday school, and fellowship space on Sunday mornings. Our traditional service is held in a lovely and intimate chapel with a wall of stained glass windows, worship is led without any electronics or amplification, and music is provided by piano. Our praise band leads our contemporary service in their larger sanctuary, with projected screens and a sound system. I want to especially thank the amazing flexibility of Dave Bowen, Charlotte Wallenburg, Vance Thomas, and the entire Altar Care team for helping us successfully move worship spaces twice in six weeks, and now running between two different spaces for worship and managing everything with two other congregations.



Salem and OPLC worshipped together during our midweek Advent services, during which the children performed a very joyful Advent program adapted from *Starry Night, Noisy Night*. On the third Sunday of Advent, the choir performed *Let the Whole World Sing!* Christmas cantata with 20 singers in both worship services. We collaborated Christmas Eve with a combined morning worship for the fourth Sunday in Advent, and each congregation led one Christmas Eve candlelight service, providing three very different and lovely worship opportunities for our combined community.



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Worship Ministries (cont.)

Thank you so much to all who have faithfully assisted in worship with electronics, readings, leading music, greeting, lighting candles, Altar Care, decorating worship space, and providing beverages and treats for fellowship. I am so glad to call Salem my church family, and I am grateful to serve you.



In Christ's love,
Heather Lewis
Director of Worship and Music

Altar Care

As we have moved our services to different locations this past year, Altar Care has continued to adapt, making sure that everything is in place for the Lord's Table each week. We currently coordinate with Overland Park Lutheran and Overland Park Presbyterian Altar Guilds to make sure there is a smooth transition between services. This includes making sure that everything we need gets transferred from the chapel to the sanctuary each week for the different services. This could have been chaos, but with help and input from a number of people, it is actually a process that works very well.



— Submitted by Paula Dougherty



Service & Outreach Ministries

Gathering Table

This ministry is a partnership with many other congregations and the Gathering Table, formerly known as Children's Memorial, located at 5000 Independence Ave. in Kansas City, MO. Salem's role has been to collect food items and then cook and serve lunch on a Saturday to a group of food-insecure folks in that area once every other month.



We continue to gather food and serve a meal 6 times per year on a Saturday. The number of people served has remained fairly steady at around 80 each time (40 on Saturday, and then we leave enough food to serve another 40 people on Sunday after worship).

Salem's volunteers donate roughly \$5,500 in meals each year. Each time we serve, our serving slots have filled up weeks in advance because so many people want to go down and serve with us. I'm so grateful for the generosity of our members, with both food items and their time.

This fall, our middle and high school youth took charge of the October meal. They planned the menu, led the charge in collecting food donations, cooked the meal together, and served it on Saturday. Our guests at the Gathering Table were so grateful for the meal, and they LOVED meeting our youth and getting to chat with them over lunch. This was a highlight of the year for me! It was so fun to serve with our youth.



In early November, Pastor Ann reached out to supporting congregations looking for help in locating a couple of furniture items for a member suffering from some health problems. I was able to find a neighbor willing to donate a power-lift recliner, and I am so grateful to Matt Brown and Libby Fox for helping me pick it up in Lawrence and deliver it to the Gathering Table member in Kansas City. Shortly after that, we found another neighbor willing to donate a queen-size bed and mattress, which Matt helped me move to our house, and then Pastor Ann and a volunteer from Church of the Resurrection picked up and delivered. I'm told these two items have been life-changing for the gentleman who needed them, and I am so grateful to the generous souls who donated the furniture!

In December, we served a holiday meal like we have in years past. We served roast pork loin with cranberry sauce, sweet potato casserole, stuffing, corn, and an assortment of cakes made by Katie Lange for dessert. We set the tables with festive plates and served guests at the tables. A couple of weeks later, guests asked Pastor Ann to make the same stuffing for their New Year's meal!

If you're interested in serving a meal, please don't hesitate to reach out to me by email at lorel.fox@gmail.com or by phone or text at (913) 205-1599.

— Submitted by Lorel Brown



Service & Outreach Ministries (cont.)

Pantry Pack Program

During 2023, Salem's Pantry Pack Program continued to provide groceries to those in need in our Lenexa community. We served 30-45 families per week. Initially in 2023, each family was offered a prepacked bag of non-perishable groceries and offered their choice of available fresh fruits and vegetables, breads, and desserts at every distribution. In July, we transitioned from a grab-and-go bag style pantry to a complete client choice pantry. In addition to our regular weekly distributions, we had several special distributions over the course of the year that provided toiletries, Thanksgiving meals, and Christmas meals.



Salem's Pantry Pack Program continues to be a Harvesters agency. Our relationship with Harvesters has allowed us to meet the increased need in our community. We also were selected to receive a \$40,000 grant from Johnson County, Kansas. This grant has offset our food costs and increased our offering to our clients for the entire year of 2023. The remainder of the grant will be available to us until June 2024.

Salem's Pantry Pack program remains committed to serving food to those in need in 2024. We would love for you to actively join our mission! We have leadership roles available, as well as opportunities for volunteering at our weekly distributions.

Respectfully submitted,
Charlotte Wallenburg

Good Faith Network

The Good Faith Network (GFN) is an interfaith organization comprised of more than 30 diverse faith communities. Salem, together with other congregations, is building people power in Johnson County to address the root cause of our community's most pressing problems. We continue to advocate for mental health and homelessness, as well as affordable housing, which was added to our slate of issues in late 2022.



This past fall, Pastor Jennifer Thomas joined Pastor Barb Jones and I as Salem team leaders. Lorel Brown stepped down as team leader. Thank you, Lorel, for your leadership and continued involvement in the GFN.

Last May, more than 1,500 people gathered, including 28 individuals from Salem, at the Nehemiah Assembly to ask Johnson County Board of County Commissioners Chairman Mike Kelly for commitments on the three issues we have been working on.

Late summer/early fall we hosted multiple listening sessions to share concerns for Johnson County. Twenty-two people said yes when asked to join the Salem team.

In November, nine people attended the Community Problems Assembly at Congregation Beth Torah, where we conducted organization business, including electing Pastor Jon as co-vice president. Each issue team provided updates, we heard compelling testimony from Lindsay Livingston (an individual with lived experience navigating the issues we are working on) and Olathe Police Sgt. Robert McKeirnan, and we received a great update from Johnson County Mental Health Center Director Tim DeWeese.

In December, we hosted our research kickoff. Eight Salem team members attended and joined the research teams.

I am blessed and thankful to serve as a team leader along with Lorel Brown and Pastor Barb Jones. In addition, I am grateful for Pastor Jon for his leadership and guidance.

In His Service,
Renee Loya

Fellowship Ministries

Fellowship Events

- January — Only strikes were thrown at our Salem Bowling Bash
- April — Everyone earned a prize at our Spring Fling Bingo
- July — The *Beauty and the Beast* musical was a wonderful show to enjoy
- October — We were all smiles at mini-golf despite the cold weather

We enjoy hosting events for everyone in the congregation to enjoy each other's company in fellowship. Everyone is welcome to attend! Fellowship happens in the small moments, and we hope everyone enjoys the refreshments and snacks our team provides each Sunday.

— Submitted by Jarred Schubert



Fellowship Ministries (cont.)

Salem Women

Book Club: This ministry impacts the lives of those who attend by building relationships with each other, nurturing individual thoughts and ideas, and supporting each other through our ups and downs. Each Christmas, we have a book gift exchange. This year we changed the November 2023 - February 2024 meeting time to 4:00 p.m. so it wouldn't be as dark when we finished. Our book selections usually involve issues dealing with morality, relationships, women in war times, both historical fiction and real-life events, and some fictional thrillers.



— Submitted by Kathy Kostroske

Bible Study: Our Women's Bible Study group meets on Thursday mornings at Koinonia Hall from 9:30 a.m. to approximately 11:00 a.m., September through May. Our group consists of approximately 10 ladies. This ministry provides spiritual growth, to learn and apply God's word in our daily life, and to grow in a deeper relationship with each other. We are a group that strives for everyone to feel safe with each other — safe to ask, think, question, and share our lives with our loving Heavenly Father. Our Bible studies vary, and everyone is encouraged to share what they would like to have as a Bible study. We welcome all women or friends of Salem to join us on Thursday mornings.

— Submitted by Cheryl Padgett

Fellowship of the Vine: Our women's social group is continuing to work on building relationships with each other through the activities we plan and engage in each month. In 2023, we dined out at The Cheesecake Factory; painted wooden signs for our homes; got pedicures at a salon; played music bingo; went to Paint, Glaze, & Fire; attended the Aspire women's conference; enjoyed beautiful music at the Kansas City Symphony happy hour concert; and shopped at the Sip, Mingle, and Jingle event at the Lenexa Public Market. We concluded our year with a cookie/ornament exchange and decorated cloth bags for the Pantry Pack program. Our hope for 2024 is to increase the number of Salem sisters who join us and bring fresh ideas for activities to participate in!



— Submitted by Chris Wise and Angela Osheim



Fellowship Ministries (cont.)

Salem Men

Monthly Breakfast: The Men's Breakfast continued to gather for breakfast and fellowship on the first Saturday of every month at a local restaurant. They spent most of the year gathering at the Big Biscuit in Shawnee, but moved to the Santa Fe Café in Overland Park at the end of the year to be closer to our worship location. All men are welcome to attend!



Fellowship of the Stein: Salem men have resumed the Fellowship of the Stein tradition, meeting for fellowship and conversation at rotating breweries and local restaurants on the third Thursday of each month. This event started several years ago but went on hiatus during the COVID period. It is a casual, fun evening for men to chat and try a variety of beers at different locations in Johnson County. A group of 5-7 men gather at a variety of breweries and restaurants each month for food, drinks, and fellowship. All men are welcome to attend!



— Submitted by Steve Wise

Education

Children's Ministry

The work of Salem's children's ministry team touches the lives of our youngest members from birth through 5th grade. From baptism classes to Sunday school to first communion classes to Vacation Bible School and more, our ministries give us the chance to connect and grow alongside some of our most curious, energetic and passionate members.



Like most of our community's events and ministries, children's ministry was challenged by the mid-year move from Central Seminary and the transitional time we went through this summer. However, we worked to provide as much continuity for our kids as possible while acknowledging when some ministries just weren't possible this year.



Like the last few years, we've held Sunday school in one all-ages group and explored various Bible stories through activities in drama, music, games, cooking, video, and art projects. On Easter morning we had a fun time doing some Easter crafts and held an outdoor Easter egg hunt — no rain this year! We did some service projects, made Advent calendars with our families, and made family Christmas gifts in December. We played a ton of games and made a lot of crafts together. We love being back in a kid-friendly classroom for Sunday school at our new location at Overland Park Lutheran Church! This year we have gotten closer as a group and learned a lot about each other and ourselves. Numbers have fluctuated a lot; we've welcomed 1-2 some weeks, 4-5 most weeks, and occasionally found ourselves in a rowdy group of 9-10.

We held a First Communion class in the spring, with students receiving their First Communion at the Maundy Thursday service. Over the summer, with the major transition of moving out of the seminary, worshipping for a month at Lenexa UMC, and then moving to OPLC, we decided it was not a great time to try to hold Vacation Bible School. We're looking forward to having Vacation Bible School this summer!



The Children's Ministry Team thanks all the adults who have engaged in ministry with our kids in 2023. It takes a village in any year to provide the time and space and connection our kids need to grow in faith and serve God in so many ways. This year, I continue to appreciate the support of team members as we have helped our youngest members through yet another year of transition in our life together. If they've learned one thing this year, we hope that it is that God is with us no matter what, in good times and tough times.

— Submitted by Lorel Brown



Education (cont.)

Youth Ministry

Salem middle and high school youth have really bonded this year, with 20 kids 6th-12th grade participating in Sunday school, confirmation, and other youth events. In the first half of the year we bowled, celebrated a Chiefs Super Bowl win, ice skated, and celebrated the end of Sunday school at Sky Zone. Fourteen of our youth presented a dramatic reading of the passion scriptures on Palm Sunday, and we were strongly supported by the congregation with our stock drive fundraiser in April, which really helped to offset cost for kids attending Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp in the summer.



We reinstated our Collective youth group with Atonement Lutheran, Holy Cross Lutheran, and Kaw Prairie churches, and youth directors meet every month to plan events to reconnect the youth in our sister churches. We rented buses and vans to travel together to Rainbow Trail twice in the summer, filled three wagons for a hayride and bonfire at Shawnee Mission Park in the fall, and helped organize the MLM Christmas Store. We have several events planned together to continue our collaboration in 2024, including Rainbow Trail and the ELCA Youth Gathering this summer.



Ten of our youth and three adults were inspired and connected to God and each other at Rainbow Trail Lutheran Camp this summer. Our confirmands went in June with Jenn Konen and Jen Beutel, and I traveled with the high schoolers in July.



Thank you so much to our parents and other wonderful adults for leading our Sunday school classes! We are so happy to have our own room at Overland Park Lutheran Church, complete with bean bag chairs, many of which were donated by Holy Cross Lutheran's youth program. We average 10-12 middle and high school youth each Sunday, and as always our youth are very involved assisting in worship by song leading, reading scripture, acolyting, running electronics, helping in the nursery, and serving as assisting ministers in the traditional service.

We ended the summer with a fun day swimming and boating at the Lewis lake house, then created comfort bags and tied fleece blankets for KidsTLC on our first day of Sunday school with a Thrivent action team grant. We planned, cooked, and served a meal at the Gathering Table, enjoyed a hayride and bonfire, played mini golf, played basketball and swam at Matt Ross Community Center, helped at the MLM Christmas Store, and we finished the year with a really fun Christmas party at the Konen home.



I am honored to work with these fantastic kids who have grown up together at Salem, as they continue to grow together in their faith journeys.

In Christ's love,
Heather Lewis
Director of Youth Ministries