

SOUNDS OF SALEM

A MONTHLY PRINT AND DIGITAL NEWSLETTER OF SALEM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VENEDOCIA, OHIO

Volume 25 Issue 12

December 2023

PASTOR'S THOUGHTS

⁷ *Let the sea and everything in it shout his praise!
Let the earth and all living things join in.*
⁸ *Let the rivers clap their hands in glee!
Let the hills sing out their songs of joy*
⁹ *before the LORD,
for he is coming to judge the earth.
He will judge the world with justice,
and the nations with fairness.*
(Psalm 98:7-9 NLT)

When the religious leaders at the time of Jesus' ministry asked Jesus what the priority of a holy life is, His response was, "You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength." And then He said the second commandment was to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30-31).

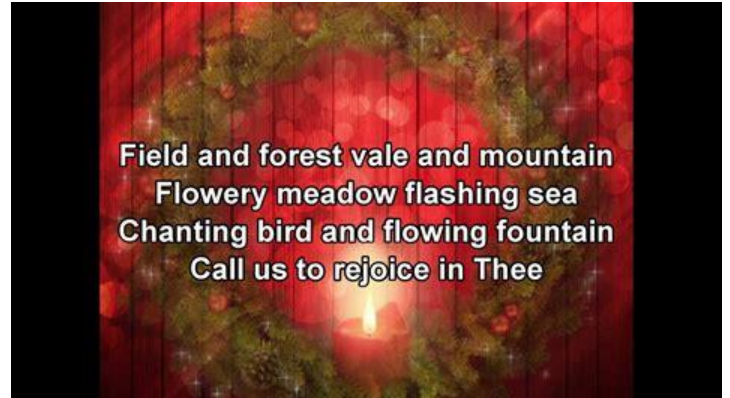
All too often we attempt to love others without first growing the depth of our love for God. When this happens, loving others is usually a difficult task. God seeks to make that task easy for us by showing His joy-filled love for us.

The great hymn writers turned to the Psalms for inspiration. "Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee" and "Joy to the World" are samples of an outpouring of worship and an expression of the love of God from the depths of our hearts.

Salvation is the source of true joy and love that was bound up in the birth of Christ. Only those who rejoice in the birth, death, and resurrection of Christ, the Messiah, will be ready when He returns. Psalm 98 called for people, nations, and all creation to rejoice in the righteous reign of God over all the earth at that time.

If you want to experience the fullness of God's love and joy this Christmas, make sure that you are trusting Christ for the eternal joy that awaits those who belong to Him. Just relish that the child who arrived on earth for Christmas is coming again soon to restore all creation as it was meant to be. Get ready, Jesus is coming again soon! Rest in His arms of love and spread that love around all the earth!

Pastor Tom Emery



Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flow'rs before Thee,
Op'ning to the sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness;
Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day!

All Thy works with joy surround Thee,
Earth and heav'n reflect Thy rays,
Stars and angels sing around Thee,
Center of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
Flow'ry meadow, flashing sea,
Singing bird and flowing fountain
Call us to rejoice in Thee.

Thou art giving and forgiving,
Ever blessing, ever blest,
Wellspring of the joy of living,
Ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother,
All who live in love are Thine;
Teach us how to love each other,
Lift us to the joy divine.

Mortals, join the happy chorus,
Which the morning stars began;
Father love is reigning o'er us,

Brother love binds man to man.
Ever singing, march we onward,
Victors in the midst of strife,
Joyful music leads us Sunward
In the triumph song of life.

Written by Henry J. van Dyke, 1907. [Youtube link](#).

Who Is the Christmas Child?



"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

This powerful Truth spoken through Isaiah the prophet 700 years before Jesus was even born is still so relevant and needed today. He's more than a baby in a manger; He's alive and active in our world today. He holds the victory over sin and death. He is our Wonderful Counselor. He is a powerful and Mighty God. He is everlasting, and the giver of true peace.

We Don't Have to Live in Fear, for We Have the Good News of Hope in Christ our Lord.

"But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord" (Luke 2:10-11).

Jesus came to this earth right in the middle of the night. Light ushered in, straight across a backdrop of darkness. How telling of what He had come to do. And at the announcement of our Savior's birth, the first thing the angel said was "Do not be afraid..." Our world today can often seem dark. It's hard not to worry and be afraid of what surrounds us. But Jesus is still the same, for He never changes. He is the Good News, He is our joy bringer, He is the Light of this world, so we don't have to fear.

Jesus Came to Our World to Point Us to the Father.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14).

Jesus chose to live among us, He "dwelt" with us, laying aside all the majesty of heaven, so He could walk in this world and point us to the Father. That is a miracle. God came to us. He reaches for us even today, always full of grace and the truth that sets us free. May we never miss the miraculous because we're too busy or distracted with other things.

Nothing Can Separate Us from the Love of Christ.

"For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39).

Christmas can be a difficult and lonely time for so many. Maybe the year has held great loss and heartache, maybe some find themselves amid huge brokenness or painful circumstances. We all need to be reminded that God loves us, that He cares, and that nothing has the power to separate us from Him.

He is Emmanuel, God with Us.

"The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel" (which means "God with us"; Matthew 1:23).

God never promised our way would always be "easy," or that His presence with us meant a life of convenience or comfort. But He did promise this, over and over in His word: He would be "with us" in it all, and would never leave us. He alone holds the power to turn around any difficult season or loss we may be facing and bring great blessing and good through it all. His very Name reminds us that He is always near, and we are never alone—what a powerful hope.

God Gave His Greatest Gift, His One and Only Son, that We Might Live Through Him.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:16).

The whole message of Christmas can be summed up here: God loved. He gave. He provided a way for us to live free. This powerful verse unpacks the truth of why



Jesus came. There is no other way for us to be saved except through Him.

Jesus Gives Us Joy, Peace, and Hope that This World Can Never Offer.

“May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit” (Romans 15:13).

If we’ve lived long enough, we know one thing to be true: We will never find true hope, joy, and peace in this world. Not ever. Only in God can we find what we need to live free. He is our hope-bringer, our joy-instiller, our peace-giver. May He fill us so that we overflow this season with the goodness and blessing of all that He is.

God is the Giver of All Great Gifts.

“Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows” (James 1:17).

God is the author of every good and perfect gift. We can trust that He knows our needs before we even ask, and we can depend on Him to provide. Many may find themselves facing huge challenges and financial losses this season. But God promises that He never changes, and He loves to give good gifts to His children. When we take our eyes off the problems and begin to notice all of his blessings that surround us, it can truly change our hearts and focus this season. Every day is a precious gift; may we never take it for granted.

We Have So Much to be Grateful for! Thank God for the Gift of Christ.

“Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!” (2 Corinthians 9:15).

Amid all the gift-giving and Christmas celebrations, the simple truth that Jesus is indeed our greatest gift can often get passed over. We can know it in our heads and even speak those words aloud, yet our hearts seem far

away. When we take some time to reflect on the magnitude of the gift of God’s Son, and what it offers us today, it truly has the power to change our whole focus this season. There is no greater gift. He is worthy of our thanks and praise at Christmas and all year through!

Salvation is in Christ Alone; We Have New Life and Hope Through Him.

“For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

“If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved” (Romans 10:9-10).

Jesus came to save. The manger is empty and so is the tomb. He’s alive today and calls us to live free through the sacrifice He made on our behalf. It’s a free gift, but we have to choose. He gave His life for us, so we could live forever. No greater joy.

Thank you, Lord!

Adapted from: “10 Verses to Include in Your Christmas Cards This Year” by Debbie McDaniel. iBelieve and Crosswalk.com. Nov 28, 2022.

God Chooses Those Who Are Available

Mary responded, “I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.” Luke 1:38

Mary is a central character in the Christmas story. The fact is, without Mary, the Christmas story would not have taken place. God needed somebody to be the mother of the Savior of the world. Whom would He choose? God had to find an available person.

We find Mary’s story in Luke 1:26-31: *In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, “Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!”*

Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. “Don’t be afraid, Mary,” the angel told her, “for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus...”



death. And even if Joseph chose not to do that, he would probably break their engagement.

Mary realized that saying yes to God meant losing the person who meant everything to her. To be available to God means to be willing to sacrifice what's most important to you. Are you willing to do that?

Every time you see Mary in a nativity scene, ask yourself: "Am I available to God? Am I keeping myself pure? Do I believe the promises of God? Am I willing to place God's glory above my reputation? Am I willing to sacrifice that which is most important to me?"

God chooses those who are available.

Have you ever sensed God calling you to do something, but you thought you weren't qualified?

How did you respond?

What opportunities is God giving you this Christmas season to be available to Him?

Let us pray: *God, help us to be like Mary, who was faithful to You and willing to do what You asked her to do. During the excitement of this Christmas season, help us listen for Your voice and be available to You. In Jesus' Name, we pray. Amen.*

Adapted from "The Nativity Devotional" by Dr. Robert Jeffers, Pathway to Victory.

Salem Music Committee

The Salem Christmas Eve Candlelight Service is at 9 PM on December 24th. It begins with the prelude and special music performed by Seth Baker and Jake Wilder.



Church Financial Update

Prayerfully consider donating to Salem Church. Offerings should be mailed to the church at:

Salem United Presbyterian Church
PO Box 678
Venedocia, Ohio 45894

Needed to Date: \$104,622.28
Received to Date: \$114,290.90

Notice that the angel said to Mary, "Don't be afraid." In the Bible, angels usually came to deliver the bad news that judgment was coming. Can you imagine what Mary must have thought when an angel appeared to her? But in this case, the angel was saying, "Mary, you don't have to be afraid, because you have found favor with God."

Of the billions of women throughout history God could have chosen to be the mother of Jesus, why did He choose Mary? According to the Jewish culture, Mary was probably a young teenager. Why did this peasant girl from Nazareth find favor with God? Mary exhibited four qualities of what it means to be available to God.

First of all, Mary was pure. Seven hundred years before the birth of Christ, Isaiah 7:17 prophesied that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. Mary was faithful to God, and she remained pure. When God is looking for somebody to use, He chooses those who are not necessarily the most talented, the most qualified, or the most beautiful, but those who are pure.

Second, Mary believed God's word. In Luke 1:45, Elizabeth said about her cousin Mary, "*You are blessed because you believed the Lord would do what He said.*" Mary didn't understand how she was going to give birth to the Savior, but she believed what God said, and she acted accordingly.

Third, Mary placed the glory of God above her own reputation. Mary knew that if she agreed to be used by God like this, it would harm her reputation. After all, who was going to believe her? People would spread rumors about her. How many teenage girls do you know who don't care about what people say about them? But Mary said to the angel in Luke 1:38, "*I am the Lord's servant. May everything you have said about me come true.*"

Finally, Mary was willing to sacrifice what was most important to her. Mary knew the consequences of allowing herself to be the mother of Jesus. The Old Testament law said if an engaged woman was unfaithful to her husband-to-be, she was to be put to

Views of Salem



2023-10-31 Salem Women's Bible Study.



2023-11-12 Session and Trustee Yearly Meeting.



2023-11-12 Veteran's Day children reading a poem beside the veteran's display.



2023-11-19 Children's song practice for the Christmas program.



2023-11-19 Van Wert County Thanksgiving Service featuring Pastor Tom and area pastors. Here is shown Paul Hoverman leading the countywide choir at Trinity Friends Church.



2023-11-12 Time for Children talk and prayer time.



IN OUR THOUGHTS & PRAYERS

Remember our elderly members, soldiers, and college students with cards and visits.

"Young at Heart"

John Lloyd

20155 Venedocia-Eastern
Venedocia, OH 45894

Marilyn Stockton

Lochhaven Apt 220
1640 Allentown Rd
Lima, OH 45805

Paul & Doris Price

18890 Bebb St
Venedocia, OH 45894

Charles Boroff

311 West 4th Street
Apt. 104
Odessa, Texas 79761

Marjorie Eutsler

Room 302
Homestead at Town Ctr
240 Towne Center Blvd
Van Wert, OH 45891

Serving our Country

Cory McCollow

(U.S. Coast Guard)
7225 Altura Place
Oakland, CA 94605

Lloyd (Butch) Eutsler

(National Guard)
14975 Van Wert-Mercer
Co. Line Road
Venedocia, OH 45894

Madison Pugh -USCGA

8800 Pine Forest Road
Apt. 6303
Pensacola, FL 32534

Dillon Ellerbrock (Marines)

Grandson of Gloria Leiter

Corbin Evans (Marines)

Grandson of Bill & Ruth
Evans

Away at College

Landon Price. Ohio University,
77 Mill St, 101, Athens, Ohio 45701

Evan Pugh University of Pikeville
147 Sycamore St, Pikeville, KY 41501

Isaiah Pugh University of Toledo
3030 Residence Drive, Ottawa East Room 4205-A
Toledo, OH 43606

Condolences

Condolences to the family of Wayne McMichael and Doug Smith.

Birthdays

1 Wrenley Breese
8 Paige Thatcher
9 Jason Lloyd
13 Marilyn Stocktom
17 Jeremy Morris
17 Jon Finn
23 Jeff Owens
30 Isaiah PUGH

Anniversaries

16 Kent & Heather McClure
28 Doug & Marilyn Strickler

Prayer Concerns

Josh Archinal (recovering from car accident)
Cindy (Davis) Barnes (liver transplant)
Charles Boroff (heart issue)
Jason Boyd (cancer)
Dave Burnett (heart)
Lynn Collins (cancer)
Stephanie Dillon (lymphoma)
Pastor Tom Emery (Long Covid recovery)
Marjorie Eutsler
Ellen Friesner
Shana Fryer
Stephanie Gamble (eye & knee issues)
Diana Glass (cancer)
Jane Harter
Jerry & Elizabeth Holscher
Kim Coil (recovery from surgery)

Pat Hunt (breast cancer)
Mandolin Jones (cancer)
Barb Kimmet
John Lloyd
Steve Martz
Carol Matthews (Lou Gehrig's disease)
David Morris (Zeb)
Monica Placke
Paul & Doris Price
Ann Rees (at Hearth & Home)
Kristy Ringwald (adenoid cystic carcinoma)
Evelyn Schwartz
Derek Sellers (Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy)
Phillip Winfield (brain tumor)
The area Nursing Homes and their residents



December 2023



Sunday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
3 9:30 AM Worship Advent breakfast following the service	4	5 7:30 AM Men's Bible Study, VW Hosp. Cafeteria. 7:00 PM Women's Bible study	6 Senior Luncheon - noon	7 Noon - Van Wert County Prayer Mtg. at Living Truth Ministries, 1180 S. Washington Street, Van Wert	8	9
10 9:30 AM Worship 5:00 PM Trustee Meeting 5:30 PM Christmas Caroling 7:00 PM Manse Open House	11	12 7:30 AM Men's Bible Study, VW Hosp. Cafeteria. 7:00 PM Women's Bible study	13	14 Noon - Van Wert County Prayer Mtg. at Living Truth Ministries, 1180 S. Washington Street, Van Wert	15	16
17 9:30 AM Worship Christmas program	18	19 7:30 AM Men's Bible Study, VW Hosp. Cafeteria. 7:00 PM Women's Bible study	20	21 Noon - Van Wert County Prayer Mtg. at Living Truth Ministries, 1180 S. Washington Street, Van Wert	22	23
24 9:30 AM Worship 9:00 pm Christmas Eve Candlelight Service & Communion	25	26 No Woman's Bible Study	27	28 Noon - Van Wert County Prayer Mtg. at Living Truth Ministries, 1180 S. Washington Street, Van Wert	29	30
31 9:30 AM Worship						

Week of	Nursery	Flowers	Organist
December 3	Bob & Denise Pugh	Dave & Carla Breese	Connie O'Neill
December 10	Jeff & Kelly Lloyd	Dave & Carla Breese	Cindy Bowsher
December 17	Bill & Ruth Evans	Dave & Carla Breese	LaDonna Allenbaugh
December 24	Merry Christmas- nursery is not staffed today	Gloria Leiter	Becky Reichart-morning Seth Baker-evening
December 31	Steve & Lindsay Richards	Gloria Leiter	To be announced
		Greeter:	Marylin & Makenna

*Salem Presbyterian Church
P.O. Box 678
15240 Main Street
Venedocia, Ohio 45894*



2023-10-28 Carol and Pastor Tom Christmas Shopping and making new friends.

Sounds of Salem Newsletter

Church Phone: 419-667-4142

Church Web Pages: www.SalemChurch.cc
www.facebook.com/salemchurchvenedocia

Secretary E-Mail: Secretary@SalemChurch.cc

Secretary's cell: 419-303-2032

Rev. Thomas Emery's cell: 419-863-9131
Pastor's Email: PastorTomEmery@live.com



**December 2023
REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY
YEAR B**

1st Sunday of Advent – Dec 3

Isa. 64:1-9	Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
1 Cor. 1:3-9	Mark 13:24-37

2nd Sunday of Advent – Dec 10

Isa. 40:1-11	Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13
2 Pet. 3:8-15a	Mark 1:1-8

3rd Sunday of Advent – Dec 17

Isa. 61:1-4, 8-11	Psalm 126
1 Thess. 5:16-24	John 1:6-8, 19-28

4th Sunday of Advent/Christmas Eve – Dec 24

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16	Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26
Rom. 16:25-27	Luke 1:26-38

1st Sunday of Christmas – Dec 31

Isa. 61:10-62:3	Psalm 148
Gal. 4:4-7	Luke 2:22-40