

PASTORAL REPORT

MARK PATTIE, SENIOR PASTOR

Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. —1 Corinthians 15:58

Dear sisters and brothers in Christ,

It has been six months since Salem's Annual Meeting. In that time, like everyone around the world, we continue to face challenges related to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Thankfully, Salem's ministries continue to flourish. God continues, even in difficult times, to move in and among and through us in wonderful ways. Don't get me wrong. Like every other member of our church community, I long for us to be free of this pandemic, gathering freely in-person, and smiling with more than our eyes at each other. But the good news is that the Good News of God's love continues to be celebrated and shared.

Indeed, our sharing of the Good News has accelerated in many ways. Through livestreaming and making our worship services available online, more people than ever are joining us for worship and listening to our sermons. The in-person experience is better in my estimation, of course, but we have now expanded our ministry in a way that is drawing more people toward Christ and into worship from throughout the Twin Cities, our nation, and the world. Some of these people who began connecting with Salem online are beginning to join us here in-person as the pandemic situation changes and they feel safe doing so.

Even with the COVID safety precautions we have in place and with many people's understandable reticence to join us in-person at this time, participation in our other offerings beyond worship has been remarkable, as well: Preschool enrollment is strong; our sports ministry is at full capacity even as we have added programming; most mission trips we offered were at or above previous participation levels; our Bible studies and adult Sunday School classes continue to be well-attended; our service opportunities continue to be well-supported by people committed to making a difference in our community; we received ten new members recently. Signs of vitality are evident.

Here are a few more highlights:

Events that a variety of staff and ministry teams collaborated on:

- Fall Kickoff – a wonderful event with great food and connections among people.
- Fall Festival – a new event that was well-organized and attended. It was a lot of fun and provided a warm welcome to the many from our surrounding neighborhood who joined us.
- The Heart of Christmas – an event that provided a great way for Salem to celebrate Christmas together. We enjoyed aspects of Salem's many traditional celebrations including music, food, service, storytelling, and devotional opportunities all in one afternoon.
- Second Sunday Lunches – we tried these again, but with COVID concerns, participation was low. I love that we are willing to try things, adjust, and even stop when they don't seem to be working well. Given the lack of participation, we will put this on hold for a while.

Adult Ministries:

- Salem's in-person Christian Education hour with Adult Sunday School and Faith 20/20 resumed this fall. The teams are doing well and have a wonderful year of classes planned.
- Friday Fellowship meets each month and is well-attended by many of our older adults with many grateful to be able to gather and connect again. The Senior Fellowship Ministry Team has delivered gift bags and cards to many of our seniors to encourage them as the pandemic increases isolation.

- JOURNEYS for 50+ sent a “Start of the School Year” gift along with a big card signed by many in our Salem community to the teachers at Global Academy, hoping to encourage them.
- Wednesday Bible Study is going strong both in the morning and evening, along with several Small Groups that provide opportunities for people to connect with God and each other.

Outreach Ministries:

- Sports Ministry reemerged stronger than ever with full programs for soccer, basketball, and Movement Monday! Our newest sport offering, pickleball for youth in grades 2-5, also reached capacity!
- Service Opportunities: Volunteers have remained committed to their volunteer commitments (Manna Market team, Loaves and Fishes teams). In the new year, we are creating additional teams to serve our ministry partners in the community.
- Missions Opportunities: On par or exceeded previous numbers of mission trip participants in most areas, (except for the group who went to Alaska Christian College) including 29 people who went to serve at the Covenant Mountain Mission Bible Camp in Virginia and 13 who served at the Joni and Friends camp. We are launching our Year of Here emphasis this year that focuses our missional efforts in our local community and state.

Congregational Care:

- Relationship-building is a cornerstone of Salem’s ministry and how we care for our people.
- Pastor Dan Bergstrom along with other pastors, staff, and members of our congregation continue to reach out and offer care and support to individuals and families. The pandemic continues to make this difficult, though it is just as important as ever, if not more so.
- We are so grateful for the ways in which Salem friends and members care deeply for one another and show that care in myriad ways.
- Pastor Dan notes that the weight of isolation takes its toll on all of us, but especially on those who live in health care facilities.

Children and Family Ministry:

- AWANA and Sunday School are both going well. Numbers are down due to the pandemic, but our building continues to be full of activity, and I weekly get reports of enthusiastic children learning the stories of faith and taking the Scriptures into their hearts and minds.
- Preschool enrollment is strong. Director Shannyn Stoffel leads a team of passionate, caring, capable teachers, and it is one of the highlights of my workdays to see the excitement of the children as they enter the building each day.
- Numerous special days and events for children and their families dot our church calendar. It is great to see so many stepping up to volunteer and help out whether on a consistent basis for Sunday School or AWANA or to help with these special events.

Youth Ministry:

- In September, Pastor Luke Korthuis stepped out of his position as Youth Pastor to pursue God’s leading to serve in Federal law enforcement. Thanks to Sue Pederson and a strong group of volunteers, Salem’s ministry with youth and their families continued well through the fall.
- Our Wednesday night Youth Group, as well as our Sunday School and Confirmation programs continue with strength. The number of Middle School students participating has been down, as has been the case throughout the pandemic, while the number of High School student has been consistently higher.
- Special events took place periodically including bowling, movies, and game nights. Due to the pandemic, a couple of events were cancelled.
- There are challenges in not having a Youth Pastor leading this area of ministry. We are so thankful for the commitment of our volunteers, and our search for a Youth Pastor continues.

Stewardship and Finances:

- Thank you for your faithfulness to the ongoing ministries of Salem. Though giving is behind our budgeted projections, we are ahead of last year's giving and we are meeting expenses. Please join us in praying for increasing strength in this foundational aspect of our ministry.
- Thank you for your generous support of our end-of-the year **50/50 Giving Initiative: Extending God's Love to Our Neighbors Near and Far**. We met and exceeded our \$100,000 goal, money with which we will be able to support mission partners doing lifesaving work around the globe and expand Salem's outreach ministries right here in our neighborhood.

There is a weariness that many of us feel in this season of life and ministry. That feeling results not only from the pandemic, but from the many other issues and pressures our society is dealing with as well. It is crucial that we continue to support one another through this time, offering one another a lot of grace and patience, and continuing as best we can to work together in the mission entrusted to us. Christ's Church has often grown and flourished when the going is tough. By God's grace, Christ's Church both beyond Salem and here among us at Salem is flourishing in this time, too. Salem is doing well, our staff and ministry teams continue to be creative and committed in fulfilling our mission amid ever-changing circumstances. And God is both blessing us with good fruit as a result of our labor and leading us to venture forward in ministry in ways that will bear tremendous fruit in the years ahead.

In closing, I want to thank the many who have supported me and our staff in this season. Kent Whitworth stepped into his role as Church Chair in July and has been a tremendous partner in ministry and leader of our Leadership Team. I offer my thanks to my fellow pastors and staff who are a blessing to work with. And thank you to the many who have encouraged and partnered with me and our staff in a myriad of ways. Your ongoing encouragement makes such a difference and I know other staff feel similarly. Thank you to those of you who have stepped up in your prayers, financial giving, and volunteering to serve at a time when many in our society are retreating. And continue to pray that God will inspire people to step up and volunteer; given all that has been going on, we are lean in the number of volunteers we have in several ministry areas. Especially as our ministry activities continue to increase in the coming months, we will need all hands on deck. As the Apostle Paul says in Galatians 6:9, "Let us not grow weary in doing good..." This is our chance. This is our call. Together, let us serve God with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength! Thanks for your partnership.

With you in gratitude and hope,



Pastor Mark Pattie