

Happy New Year, Everyone!

As we are rolling into this new year, may you be blessed with good health, financial stability, and greater depth in all your relationships (especially with the Divine). This is my prayer for all of you.

Once again this New Year, Salem has a number of things coming up:

- This Sunday, Feb 2nd, our parish will hold its **annual meeting**. During it, we will elect new council members and have the opportunity to suggest recipients of our benevolences. We will also discuss the state of our parish, hearing reports from the Secretary, Treasurer, President, Sunday School/VBS team, and Pastor. Please make plans to attend the meeting right after the regular, Sunday service.
- The following Sunday, Feb 9th, we will have a presentation during the after-service social time by the Isanti County Sheriff's office on **security for our parish and community**. In light of current national and international events, the council thought hearing ideas on how we can be more confident in our safety would be good. All are welcome.
- Remember that each month, on the 3rd Saturdays at 8am, the **men of our parish** are invited to join together for fellowship, inspiration, discussion, support, and prayer. The next meeting is Feb 15th. This year, the group will be using the book Ride the River by Larry Christenson for jump-offs. Stop in any month to give this a try. This group is facilitated by Hans Erdman.
- Also, remember that every-other Wednesday at 7pm, the women of our parish are invited to join Pr. Ellen Erdman for a **bible study**. For the winter and spring meetings this year (Jan 29th and Feb 12th, then resuming again after Easter), the group will be considering Laura Story's video series: "When God Doesn't Fix It: Learning To Walk In God's Plans Instead of Our Own". You may join the group at any point (and don't need to make it to all of the meetings).
- The preparatory season of **Lent** will soon be on us as well. Parishioners meet at 6pm on the Wednesdays throughout Lent to eat a simple supper of soup and sandwiches as well as share in conversation. Then, at 7pm each week, we gather to pray and study (subject matter still to be determined) as we get ready to celebrate Holy Week and Easter Sunday. We kick this off on **Ash Wednesday**, Feb 26th. Please join us which ever weeks you can for one, the other, or both!
- **Palm Sunday** will be celebrated on Apr 5th during our usual 9:30 service. **Good Friday** service will be held on Apr 10th at 7pm. **Easter** is celebrated on Apr 12th this year; remember that all are welcome to bring a dish to pass/stay to eat **brunch** after the 9:30 service on Easter morning.
- Looking further ahead, we will celebrate **First Communion** during the 9:30 service on May 17th (if you have family members who are in 2nd grade or older, ask them if they'd like to join at our Table this spring and then talk to me). We will also have a **spring clean-up day** sometime in May; watch for a date. June 14th will be **Heritage Day** (honoring the Bellin family). We are planning on sponsoring a **Vacation Bible School** again the last week of July (details forthcoming). The **annual parish picnic** is scheduled for Aug 2nd with the outdoor service at 10:30 followed by a potluck picnic lunch and family games.

In addition to the above calendar items, I have three wonderful things to announce:

- Salem is getting a **new organ!** We had the opportunity to purchase a barely-used, high quality Allen organ for \$3900 (+\$600 for installation). This organ is an excellent instrument from a top-line manufacturer that sells new for about \$35,000. The council approved this purchase at it's January meeting contingent upon the larger parish's confirming vote; that vote was taken after the service on Jan 19th. The new organ will be installed on Feb 6th.

Thanks again to the Kuhnemund family for the donation of the organ which we have used the last few years. This organ was offered to us just as our previous organ literally stopped working. While this Lowry organ filled a sudden need and has worked well for us, we have known that we required a 'real church organ' and realized with this Allen organ that we had a chance to be proactive rather than reactive (because the Lowry suddenly stopped working). This new-to-us organ is a substantial upgrade, will be serviceable for a very long time, and presents to us a great opportunity.

If you would like to donate to help off-set the cost of the organ, please talk to either me or Shirley Guillard. If you or someone/someplace you know would like to have the Lowry organ, please contact either me or Jerry Youngquist before the 6th.

- We are now recording the sermon on Sundays. If, for some reason, you are not able to join us during the morning OR you want to 'listen again', you can find it posted on the parish web-site (www.salemlc-oxford.org) that evening. Accessing it is rather easy via smart-phone or computer; Jerry Youngquist or I can help you if necessary.
- We have welcomed a number of new households to our parish as official members over the last year:
 - o Paul and Becky Fiske – Feb '19
 - o Chris and Renee Dale – Mar '19
 - o Jim and Rosalind Elmquist – Oct '19
 - o Evie Yates – Oct '19
 - o "Fritz" Wheatley – Dec '19
 - o Deb and Brian Hoppe – Dec '19
 - o Linda and Doug Miller – Dec '19
 - o Walt Koecher and Chris Tanata – Dec '19

We now have nearly 150 households associated with our parish, of which about 60 are members. A new and updated address list is being printed; if you would like a copy, please ask for one from me some Sunday after the service.

Salem is alive! Membership and financial well-being indicate our health, but they are simply manifestations of a *much deeper* vitality and vibrancy. Salem is blessed with health, financial stability, and – most importantly – growth in our relationships with one another and with our Loving, Forgiving, Empowering, Merciful, and Saving Lord! All are always welcome to be a part of this, but especially in this New Year. Thank you all for what you do and who you are.

In Christ, I remain yours. Rob.

651.261.7333. robkrajewski72@gmail.com