

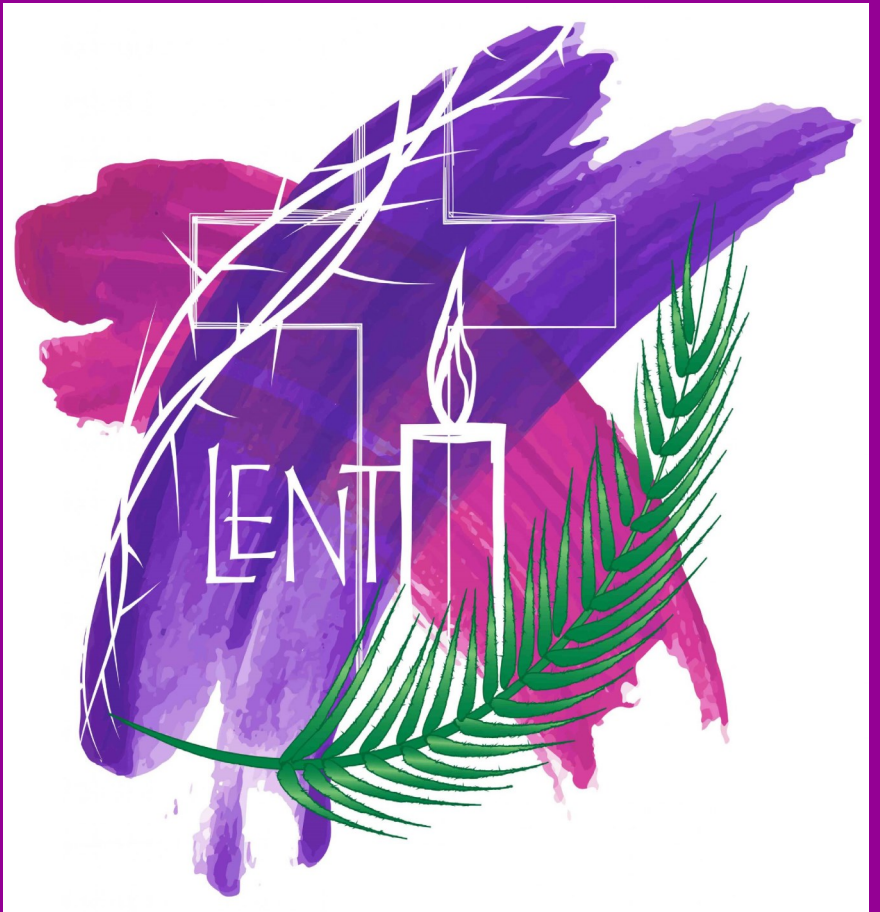


Our Saviour Lutheran Church

THE SEEKER

FEBRUARY 2023

Rev. Justin Johnson, pastor



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Our Saviour Evangelical Lutheran Church
56 Cleveland Drive
Croton-On-Hudson, NY 10520
(914) 271-4632

Sunday Worship Schedule

Sunday School: 9:00 am

Worship: 10:00 am

Coffee Hour: following worship

Weekday Office Schedule

Office hours: 9:00 am - 12:00

Office Phone: (914) 271-4632

Office E-mail: mail@oursaviourcroton.org

Website: www.oursaviourcroton.org

Rev. Justin Johnson, pastor



Mission Statement:

Our mission is to offer spiritual grounding and growth by connecting with God and one another.

Vision Statement:

Our vision is to provide meaningful, well-attended, active, and growing worship, education, fellowship and service opportunities.



Happy New Year!

I hope the holiday celebrations were healthy and joyous. I joked that my Christmas was like 1987 all over again, as I received a playable Atari game system that uses the old cartridges. Nostalgia was delightful. I hope your celebrations went just as well.

As we enter 2024, there was good news church wise. We ended the year in the black, thanks to the generosity of the congregation, the 90th celebration, and an extra PPP loan credit. We had expected a shortfall when we proposed the budget, so to end in the black was a reason to celebrate. We also had 2 new members join the congregation and our council is at full capacity again. I regularly remind people, we only re-opened in 2021, so it has only been 2 years since we were closed with no people, so seeing celebrations and movements again is joyous.

Looking forward, we are doing some excellent things on council. The Property team has created a document showing what projects we will be working on in the next few years, so we are all on the same page as to what needs to be done. Some we will be able to do with volunteers, but others will need more professional work. We just need things, like the fellowship hall furnace, to behave.

We are also focused on bringing in other groups to use our building. Since 2021, when we reopened, we have welcomed Al-Anon, Yoga, Croton Caring, 2 girl scout troops, 2 local community cooks, and AA now has two separate groups on Saturday night. Each of these groups are focused on serving the community. We hope to continue this trend as we look for more permanent renters for our space mid week.

Finally, we will focus on a vision for where we are going. In February, the council will go on retreat for half a day and come up with some achievable visions. We did this in 2019 and the church shut down for Covid that year, so they never took off. 2021-2022 was rebuilding and reshaping. 2023 was getting a sense of where we really are as a congregation and what is honestly doable and what needs to be let go. 2024 will be what the new vision will look like and how it might be achieved.

Continued ==>

One thing I keep reminding people is, while we say internally we are a small congregation, across Metro NY Synod and across Westchester, we would be considered a medium sized congregation. Church, as a whole, is not the same as it once was in any denomination. Every congregation is reshaping and re-looking at how they do ministry. We made early moves to become community focused with who we brought in to rent the church.

We want to continue this, not so we can grow on Sundays, but so we can be Jesus in the world and help others. This is who we are. The church since its inception has been about serving others. Somewhere along the line, the size of the church became what was important, but that was not the vision cast in Acts. The Church was meant to be a place of service to the community, to the poor, to the immigrant/refugee (the alien is the word in the Bible), the widow, and those on the fringe. It was to be a voice to help bring justice and hope where there is no hope. That is what I want us to keep focused on because if that is what we are doing, then we are doing the mission of Jesus. Rick Warren famously wrote in this book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, "it's not about you. It's about God and God's purpose for you." In other words, it was never about growth or bank income, but always about service and how we can serve others.

2024 COUNCIL MEMBERS & OFFICERS

OFFICERS:

President: Sue Montgomery **Vice President:** Matt Papertsian
Secretary: Marilyn Grantner/Jamie Polcari **Treasurer:** Bryan Montgomery

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS:

Property: Matt Papertsian **Stewardship:** Marilyn Grantner
Worship & Music: Eleanor Keil **Social Ministry:** LeeAnn McCarthy
Finance: Sue Montgomery **Christian Education:** Jamie Polcari
Evangelism & Outreach: LeeAnn McCarthy **Finance:** Sue Montgomery
Mutual Ministry: MaryBeth Soucy



On Sunday, January 14 at 4:00 p.m. the clergy from St. Augustine's Episcopal Church, Our Savior Lutheran Church, the Unitarian Universalist Congregation of the Hudson Valley, Temple Israel of Northern Westchester and Asbury United Methodist Church gathered to lead a vigil.

The choir from the Unitarian Church joined them singing an anthem written by their music director. This event was only online. We prayed, we lit candles, we shared scripture and story; we grieved the loss of life that has happened and prayed for an end to the killing.

ASH WEDNESDAY SERVICE with

Imposition of Ashes

Wednesday February 14

at

7:00PM



TREASURERS REPORT

-Bryan Montgomery

With thanks to the Christmas spirit, and the generosity of our congregation I am glad to say that we ended 2023 with a higher amount in the black than I expected. We ended up receiving \$13,251 more than we spent. Thank you for everyone's generosity. It probably won't be the last time, but last year we did receive a Covid tax refund of \$23,693. That is partly why we passed a budget for this year that has us almost \$29,000 in the red. We are hoping this is very conservative.

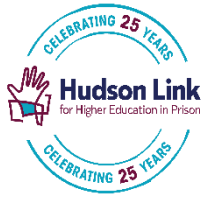
It is challenging to budget our contributions and so we used conservative numbers based on our regular contributions. We were fortunate to have a few months where the contributions were significantly higher, if we experience that again this year, it should help this year's financial picture.

Last year it was agreed that a portion of the funds and matching donations for the Christmas fair would be gifted to several charities with special meaning to Our Saviour. One of these is the Darajani Secondary School in Tanzania that Dr. Mtui volunteers at. I have been in contact with the Headmistress and she has said that our gift will help them to renovate the students dining room. Included are a few pictures from the school.

Bryan.



APPRECIATION & THANKS FOR OUR SAVIOUR OUTREACH



Hudson Link: **For Higher Education in Prison**

Thank you so much for your generosity! Hudson Link deeply appreciates your donation in the amount of \$412.00. Your contribution makes it possible for our students to achieve unthinkable success for themselves, their families, and the people whose lives they touch before and they touch before and after release. Thank you for providing so many with a chance to accomplish something remarkable.

Support like yours has made it possible for Hudson Link to grow, reach and exceed significant goals.

Hudson Link awarded 117 college degrees to students across the state, celebrating over 1,000 degrees awarded to date.

Hudson Link opened our doors to the first womens' transitional house, affectionally named "Mo Place" after the beloved, late Coordinator Arlene "Mo" Mohammed in April 2022.

Hudson Link hosted in-person graduation ceremonies for the first time since the onset of the pandemic, including the first Bachelor's degree ceremony at Taconic Correctional Facility.

Hudson Link began our Continuing Education program that supports students to enroll in school to complete degrees, pursue graduate education or enroll in trade certificate programs as well as help to pay direct costs such as tuition, transportation and child-care.

Hudson Link is more than just a college program – for many it is the support system that keeps them going through these trying and unparallel times.



Seafarers International House

Thank you for spreading Holiday cheer among seafarers through your generous donation of time, satchels, knitting and supplies to fill them, Your donation combined with those of other individuals, congregations, business and youth groups resulted in over 3,100 satchels being delivered to seafarers this past Christmas season. This is a historic record!

Some late donations are still being delivered as Christmas time continues through January 6th. Your satchels, knitted hats and scarves and other donated supplies show seafarers, who are away from loved ones for long periods of time, that we appreciate their sacrifice. Many are from low wage countries and they save every penny to support their families.

Our port chaplains not only deliver satchels, but bring essentials like medication or fresh produce and sometimes trivial things such as pizza or sweets when seafarers cannot come ashore because they were unable to get visas as US consulates abroad are backlogged.



Thank you for your organizations gift of \$125.00 to Lutheran World Relief, When you love your neighbors with your generous gifts to LWR, you change lives in amazing ways.

For Walla Ali al Ali, a Syrian living in Lebanon, your love arrived in the form of a beehive. As the primary breadwinner for her family – including her mother, developmentally disabled brother, a niece and a nephew – she struggled to find work amid Lebanon's economic crisis. Her family was safe from the war in Syria, but they didn't have access to adequate food or basic medical care.

Through LWR, Walla enrolled in a livelihoods program for refugees and received all the training and supplies she needed to start a business as a bookkeeper. With the money she earned, she also planted a vegetable garden to help feed her family. Now she is earning enough money to keep her family afloat and she is even training other women how to produce and sell honey.

Thank you for saving and transforming lives by loving your neighbors like Walaa!



STEWARDSHIP

Managing God's Gifts To Us

Dear church family,

Time is marching on and we have moved into a new year- 2024.

Looking back at 2023, we had the wonderful remembrance of our 90th anniversary celebration with Bishop Egensteiner. It was nice to have the Bishop visit and celebrate with us. We rejoiced in a wonderful Christmas season with our worship services, neighborhood caroling, and the festivities of our Christmas Fair. The fair allows us to come together in fellowship and gives people from the community a chance to come in and meet us.

We welcomed Hannah, Michael, and Miguel. We had to say goodbye to the Gabrielsens, the Esteves, and the Mtui families as they moved to different states and parts of NY. While it was sad they left, we rejoice in their new adventures in new homes. Some members of our congregation have celebrated or will celebrate their 90th birthdays.

While it is nice to look back, as we move forward, we focus on the future of Our Saviour asking, what will it be like to celebrate 95 years or 100 years? Will Our Saviour be there for those celebrations or will it look different? While those years sound far away, in reality it's just around the corner.

We hear of churches choosing holy closure or choosing to merge or yolk with other congregations as part of their vision for new life. There are articles written on the subject- why are people leaving the church or why are churches closing? No one really knows why, except it is part of life as things change and values change. Sometimes you hear of churches experiencing great growth, God bless them as they do.

We focus though on our congregation of Our Saviour. We are growing, but not as fast as some may want. We have a strong core

membership who contribute both financially and with their volunteer time.

The question we have to ask is- what are we here for?

Our main focus is to preach the Gospel.

We have a place where people can come together, worship and receive the sacrament on Sunday and other times throughout the year. We have a building that is available for the community as outreach to help others and so they can have meetings. We have a parsonage, where the pastor can reside and has been called by the congregation to preach and lead us in Word and Sacrament. We have an organist to help us "sing a joyful noise unto the Lord." We have an office administrator to help with the myriad of things taken for granted, such as bulletin production, the newsletter, the calendar, etc.

As a member of Our Saviour, we are the caretakers of all of this- the buildings, our staff, the worship, etc. As caretakers, this sometimes means repairs to the building, heating, and the other things we don't want to think about similar to home owning.

What does Our Saviour mean to us?

Can we make a financial commitment, either electronically or through donations to ensure the current and future Our Saviour? Can we volunteer to help someplace? How can you help the congregation and the mission we share?

Jim Croce penned the words to the song,

"If I could save time in a bottle...to save every day till eternity passes away, just to spend time with you." We love spending time with each other, worshipping together, and being with one another, as we have for the last 90 years. What does that look like for the next 5-10 years and beyond?

May the peace of the Lord be with you all.

-Eleanor Souderland

FEBRUARY 2024

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1 AI Anon Mtg 1-2pm	2	3 YOGA Class 9:45am AA 7:00pm
4 Fifth Epiphany WorshipService 10:00am via Facebook & IN SANCTUARY	5	6 Christian Crafters 9:00am –noon AA 7:00pm	7 NA 7:00pm	8 AI Anon Mtg 1-2pm	9	10 YOGA Class 9:45am AA 7:00pm
11 Transfiguration of Our Lord WorshipService 10:00am via Facebook & IN SANCTUARY	12	13 Christian Crafters 9:00am –noon AA 7:00pm	14 Ash Wednesday Service with Ashes at 7:00pm NA 7:00pm	15 AI Anon Mtg 1-2pm	16	17 YOGA Class 9:45am AA 7:00pm
18 First Lent WorshipService 10:00am via Facebook & IN SANCTUARY	19	20 Christian Crafters 9:00am –noon AA 7:00pm	21 NA 7:00pm	22 AI Anon Mtg 1-2pm	23	24 YOGA Class 9:45am AA 7:00pm
25 Second Lent WorshipServices 10:00am via Facebook & IN SANCTUARY	26	27 Christian Crafters 9:00am –noon AA 7:00pm	28 NA 7:00pm	29 AI Anon Mtg 1-2pm		