

2024 May Ministry Reports

Seth Dunham, Senior Pastor

Whenever we get to this point in the year, it's a joy to get to look back and reflect on how incredibly faithful God has been to Salem. Frankly, it's easy because I love what God has called me to do. You may or may not know but as the Senior Pastor the three priorities of my role are teaching, staffing, and vision. Here are a few snapshots of those this past year.

Teaching

We've spent this entire school year going through the gospel of Mark. It's high view of Jesus and discipleship is what makes it so challenging, but so good. As we wrestle with the real, historical Jesus we find that who he is and what he does resonates in our hearts. Not simply because we're grateful for all that he accomplished for us, but also the life he calls us to. To support the series, the companion guides were a huge addition and the number of Life Groups going through them together has been a huge success. Thanks to everyone for sticking in there with me! It's amazing to me that being obedient to him asking us to go through how God lined the series up with our Vision.

Vision

This has been a two-year process of reading, engaging, dialoguing, training, and constant prayer. To be able to roll it out into different groups and peoples to get feedback both refined and strengthened it. I believe we are presently resting on a fulcrum that both honors Salem's rich a positive history, while tipping us toward a bright future, ready to follow Jesus, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to build God's kingdom plan. I am so excited to see the stories that come out of these next five years! Stories of transformation as we are shaped more and more into Christlikeness and as people in our city and world give their lives to Christ. Yes, it's something that we should always be doing, but to say that as an entire church, for the next five years, that's our greatest focus is both simple, beautiful, exciting, and challenging! Many of you might be wondering what next steps are. Quite candidly we all needed to catch our breath a little bit. But I'm excited to tell you that we'll be sharing a lot more during May about some simple, concrete, actionable steps that we can all take together.

Staffing

Staffing transitions are almost always difficult, but we also trust how God is moving and working as he's building his kingdom. We love and thank those who helped make Salem home for so many, but we also welcome the likes of Veronica Wyland in Kids who's doing an amazing job! Did you know that come May she'll have had the privilege to dedicate more than 30 kids...since last September! She is joined by Lori Myers who's been a huge help with all the massive prep that goes into the chaos of Sundays and Wednesdays. Peg Knudson has worked her magic in Business Operations moving us forward organizationally. Jeff Edison has accomplished a ton in his part-time role in facilities, with a growing list of projects that include a cry room for nursing moms, replacing the tables in the balcony, getting up basketball hoops outside for neighborhood kids, flooring, and more! That's not to mention everyone else who continue excel. Honestly, our staff camaraderie and care is the best it's ever been. We are committed to building the right team and best team for what God is calling us to do. We've had multiple interviews for both Missions and Care.

While Missions is in an ongoing process and discussions, as for the Care position, I'm excited to announce that Pastor Ken will be shifting some of his role into the Care position. He'll do an exceptional job!

All the above makes me think about how much I love what I get to do. Each week I look forward to our prayer time on Tuesdays (where we pray through the entire prayer together as a Leadership Team), to our all staff coffee check in on Wednesdays (where we laugh, encourage each other, celebrate what God is doing, inform each other, and pray together), to our Life Group (where we have so much fun but experience deep grace and accountability as we open up God's word together), and lastly, I love getting to Sunday's when we open up God's word as a church. I love what I get to do and I'm so thankful for each of you. Thank you, Salem.

Other Highlights

- The Inyu's Habitat for Humanity Home – We're all familiar with how hard this last year has been on Thomas and his family because of his health. We offer continued prayers, over and over. But we also celebrate how God provided through a brand new home and how we got to come alongside them not simply with a check, but by helping build it with our very hands!
- Newcomers – We've seen a ton of new young families coming to Salem and get connected, including a group of about 25 college students!
- Kids and Youth – Both continue to excel and grow. What a neat thing to see so many people so excited about adding "Future Generations" to our Values. The response was overwhelming!
- Community garden – We saw great things last year, and expect to see God at work in even more ways this summer! Thank you Jenna Kahly!
- Nicaragua – I'm excited to see a group of 10 from Salem (including myself) heading there in July.
- Ellen Hopkins – Honestly, this is hard to capture in a sentence. One note – the school district has found out all that Salem is doing at the school and have offered praise and thanks! This continues to be one of our most fruitful ministries. You should come join!
- Finances – Our giving is up, and spending is down. Praise God! Hoping we see continued growth in this so we can both save in wisdom and spend for ministry impact.

Looking Ahead

I think it goes without saying that I'm excited to see an entire church begin to take courageous and bold first steps into our relationship with Christ while also bringing him to where we live, work/study, or play. I'm also excited for the upcoming teaching series. This summer we'll be moving into some more practical issues, like how to talk to God when life isn't what you expect (Habakkuk), how to be a Gospel Believer (mark of a disciple). This fall we'll dive for a bit into our new Vision Frame, but then finish the bulk of the semester in the OT book of Daniel. I'm also excited to see how God fills out our staffing as we move towards Visionary alignment in our ministries, so that we can continue to shepherd, support, encourage, train, and equip all of us as saints to fulfill the work God has called us to.

Prayer Requests

Pray for our Vision and our Staff. Pray for me as I continue to Teach, lead, disciple, and shepherd. Please also pray for Nikki and I as we wait patiently for God to lead our family through the process of adoption.

Brady Heuberger, Worship Director

New Sound Board

The biggest highlight over this last year was the financial support and purchase of the new soundboard system. First, thanks so much to Bee and her hard work in researching the right board for our church. Second, thanks to the elders and their willingness to partner with the worship ministry and financially support a needed upgrade. The new soundboard has already improved the sound quality on our live stream and has created a more controlled balance in the worship center. This big purchase also includes new hear-back systems with a quality of sound unmatched by the system we had before. The installation is only about 90% complete and we hope to have it all completed by the end of the summer.

Congregational Response

With the continued addition of the song selection committee and scripture during musical worship, the congregation has been participating in noticeable ways. I have truly heard our Salem body worship on Sundays as we strive for familiarity with the worship songs. One of the most powerful and encouraging experiences is to hear your brothers and sisters worshipping the Lord together. It is a taste of heaven, and I would love to continue to encourage all of you to sing with all you have and praise the Lord.

New Additions

With Bee stepping down this year, Salem has been blessed to hire Luke Johnson to serve in a part-time role on the technology side of the ministry. His impact is already felt, and I am so thankful to have him on board. We have also seen many youths interested in getting involved in our ministries and are thankful for their desire to use their gifts for the Lord.

Things to Look Forward To

I have always had the desire to grow and mature new worship leaders in the Salems worship ministry. Last week I met with my fellow worship leaders, and we formulated a plan to help grow and disciple new leaders within our ministry. We pinpointed a couple of people and look forward to seeing what the Lord is going to do.

Prayer Requests

We are still praying and searching for another part-time role to help Luke and I best run our worship ministries here at Salem. So, please pray that the Lord will lead the right person to serve our church. Pray also for our volunteers as they put in extra effort and hours to fill gaps!

Veronica Wyland, Kids Director

It has been eight months since stepping into the position of Kid's Ministry Director here at Salem and as I reflect on all that God has done and look forward to all the opportunities ahead my heart is full. Getting to know leaders, kids, and families has been one of my top priorities and greatest joys. We have an amazing group of leaders who faithfully pour into our kids each week here at Salem. Their love for the Lord and the next generation inspires me week after week. I am so thankful for each of them. Getting to know the kids and allowing them to get to know me has opened the door to authentic relationships and mutual learning as we gather each week.

Lori Myers joined our team at the end of October as the part-time role of Kid's Ministry Administrative Assistant. She comes with a wealth of experience and a passion for ministering to kids. We are so blessed to have her and grateful for all she is doing to serve the kids, families, and leaders in our church family.

Sunday mornings

Each week kids explore stories in scripture that are connected to the overarching story of redemption fulfilled in Christ. Teaching and activities are designed to help kids grow in their understanding of who God is and understanding their story in light of the truths revealed in scripture. We have been ministering to an average of 90 kids each Sunday between the two services with over 50 volunteers who serve on a rotational basis. These volunteers are passionate about helping kids feel known and loved and connecting them with the life-transforming truths of the Gospel.

Wednesday Preschool

Cubbies, an AWANA program designed for children who are two years from starting kindergarten, spend time singing songs, learning Bible stories, and memorizing scripture each week. The kids in this group amaze me with all they can learn and memorize. It is never too early to teach the big truths of scripture to the next generation.

Wednesday Elementary

- School-aged kids participate in large group teaching time, small group discussion and activity time, and game time in the gym. This January we began a journey together through the book of James. Each week Kids learned that Faith in Jesus changes us from the inside out. Kids were challenged as they learned truths like trials make your faith stronger, God's people should not show favoritism, faith without works is dead, fights and quarrels begin in the heart, and our words reveal what is in our hearts.
- Each week kids learned a new Truth About God or TAG. Since the Bible is first a book about God, helping kids grow in their understanding of who He is and what he is like is foundational in helping them understand the Bible. It is our goal the help kids develop a relationship with God through Jesus leading to a life changed from the inside out. Connecting truths about God to the life he designed us for, gives kids a framework for how faith in Jesus changes us from the inside out.
- Kids spend 30 minutes in small group time with their leaders to discuss the scripture lesson, do activities to help them connect more deeply with the teaching, and build relationships with each other.
- Cave cards are sent home each week and designed to help students explore more about the lesson from the night and give them practical ways of living out what they are learning. Each week I am amazed as I read how students are living out their faith.

- Missions nights were new this year as well. Beth Karges taught kids about how all God's people are called to be on mission and some people He calls to be missionaries. Kids learned what a missionary is, how to support missionaries, and how to share the truth of God's love with others. Beth was able to share a video teaching with students while she was on a missions trip in the Middle East and then engaged with a floor of questions from students when she returned home. This was a wonderful addition to our Wednesday nights and God moved in powerful ways as kids were challenged to think about those who have never heard the Gospel.

Dedications

We will have dedicated nearly 30 children since September of last year after Celebration Sunday on May 26th. This is an incredible blessing and so encouraging to see families feeling compelled to dedicate their children to the Lord.

Summer Blast

This year's theme is Breaker Rock Beach, God's rock-solid truth in a world of shifting sands. Kids will be challenged as they discover that God's truth never changes, that everyone needs Jesus, and learn to speak the truth in love. This is our biggest outreach event of the year, and we are praying that God draws kids from all over our community to hear the life-giving message of the Gospel.

God is moving powerfully in the lives of the kids here at Salem and I am so blessed to partner with so many amazing volunteers as we walk alongside them and keep pointing them toward Jesus.

Kent Hannestad, Youth Pastor

Highlights from this past year include the 30th Annual Dinner Theater which raised a lot of money for the youth, brought back past participants, directors, and the founder, Dr. Phil Brown, and provided a great experience for those in attendance. There was also an impacting apologetics conference in the Twin Cities called Reality, fall retreats at Cooperstown Bible Camp, a full week of ministry during our Local Missions Experience, a deeply impacting mission trip to Laredo, Texas, a life-changing District Youth Conference, and group-bonding times of teaching and worship on Wednesday evenings. In addition to the incredible year-ending events where there's reflection on the year and the seniors are celebrated, the youth are looking forward to another Local Missions Experience in June and Challenge, the national Evangelical Free Church youth conference, in July.



2023-2024 Theme: **everywHERE**. God's work of discipleship begins "HERE", in your heart and life, but is meant to go and impact "everywhere" (like where you live, work, study, and play!) Youth were saved, baptized, and moved in their spiritual lives. One student, who has

been part of the youth group for only a couple months, told her parent recently, "I wish I would have known about this group much earlier!" Another student shared, "Through the mission trip to Laredo, God clarified His call on my life!" A handful of youth, at the recent District Youth Conference, made life-changing commitments to follow Jesus! Praise the Lord!

The greatest need for the youth ministry is to have people committed to pray for the youth and the leaders. Please pray for the youth as they seek to grow in their relationship with Jesus, deepen their understanding of God's word, and serve as Christ's ambassadors in a confused world in desperate need of hope. And please pray for the youth leaders to show God's love unconditionally, seek God relentlessly, and be infectious examples of ones who follow Jesus.

Ken Bohney, Connections Pastor

This is the one opportunity each year where I get to publicly thank the volunteer leaders who head up teams and do so much by sacrificially serving and extending extravagant love to the people of our church through their teams. Jason Lizakowski (Gathering Grounds), Lewie LaChance and Beth Jones (Greeters), Vicki Bohney (Connections), Josh Hawkins & Darren Kallod (Security), Dan Cushing (Encore), Jodi Harrington (Library), Kenyon Williams (Adult Learning Groups), Dave Engstrom (Living Free & Men's groups), Allen Nelson (Prayer Group), Judy Hannestad (Dinners for Nine and Care Team), Cindy Buchanan and Jessica Large (Wednesday Night Meals) and all of our Life Group leaders and coaches who shepherd and care for many in our church family. Each one of them represents and leads a group of people who are helping to build a discipling culture. Thank you!

Highlights

- Life Groups: People have found a sense of belonging and are struggling well together through extravagant love. Many of the groups are thriving and developing genuine loving relationships.
- Women: Our Women's Bible Studies were inspired as they explored Exodus all year and experienced deepening and growing community through relational learning and sacrificially serving, including cleaning the Inyu's new home. In January, a few Salem women vulnerably shared about God's faithfulness in their lives as many women gathered for a wonderful evening led by Brenda Heinen and a team of volunteers.
- Men: Pastor Kent launched our monthly gathering titled That Men's Group, focusing on truth, hoopla and accountability, which has been a great way for guys to get plugged in, grow, and some have fun.
- Evangelism Is Relationship (EIR): Six individuals were trained to lead this curriculum, which is designed to help every follower of Christ make a difference in their world through intentional relationships. Ann Olsen and Kyle Hellevang led our first group to equip participants to be disciple-makers where they live, work, study, and play.
- Wednesday Night Meals: Thanks to Cindy, Jess, and volunteers who bless our parents, students, and volunteers through providing twice monthly meals, giving parents a break and providing table time for many.
- Sports Groups (Gym): What a blessing to have our renovated gym! Pickleball, basketball, and volleyball are all thriving weekly gatherings for fun, exercise, and building relationships.
- Discover Salem: Bi-annually continues to be a great place for people to discover the ethos of Salem and to get to know our ministries, leadership, and other new people in our church.
- Discover You: Bi-annually continues to equip people for ministry by helping them discover their spiritual gifts, strengths, passions, and personality. Liz Jost is co-leading this class as part of her role of volunteer development.
- Newcomer's Group: A taste of Life Group and great on-ramp for new people to get connected. The group is lovingly and caringly led by Dennis and Ruth Gladen and Pamela Kumi.
- Care Team: Judy Hannestad and the care team are doing a wonderful job of helping people feel loved and served through prayer, visitations, cards, meals, and celebrations.
- People's Stories: Getting to know the family of Russ and Helen Danielson and witnessing a deep faith lived out as Helen battles pancreatic cancer. Seeing God's hand in sparing the life of Eric Johnson by preventing him from getting on a plane when he needed emergency gallbladder surgery. Watching Al and Nancy Cattanach trust God as they faced multiple medical challenges and the loss of loved ones.

Next Year

We will get to strategize how to best lead and guide our ministries in light of the Vision! I am excited for new Life Groups starting, additional people serving in meaningful ways, and considering some additional strategic ways we might care well for our church family.

Prayer Requests

I ask that you pray for additional loving and Godly people to serve as Life Group Leaders as there are more and more folks becoming part of our church. I'd also ask you to pray for the people who are new to our church, that God would lead them to groups where they develop a sense of belonging and experience the joy, love, and friendship that happen around the "Table." We have lots of needs and opportunities in our church. I ask you to pray for those in our church that are either new or have been around for a while, but have not necessarily found their fit for ministry, that we would be able to connect them to ministries where they will be fruitful and fulfilled.

Josh Hawkins, Elder

Ecclesiastes 3 reminds us that there is a time for everything and that, without God, all our labor is meaningless exhaustion. In this past year, we at Salem have known birth and death, planting and uprooting, healing, tearing down and building up, weeping and laughing, mourning and celebration, both successful searching and unsuccessful, and have had to choose both silence and speaking. It has been a fruitful year, and we have seen God do amazing and wonderful things, and we praise him.

The lengthy labor of developing the vision for Salem came to fruition this year and was rolled out in stages to staff, members, and the church at large. Salem is challenged to evaluate intentional daily gospel interactions with others, bringing the gospel to where we live, work, study, and play. We look forward to the continued implementation of the Vision and are excited to see God working through Salem as we look to saturate our metro area with the news of God's grace and forgiveness over the next five years.

We are encouraged by the many individuals who have made Salem their church home during the past year along with the many baptisms, child dedications and new members. God continues to move in the hearts of men, women and children as they take steps of faith in their spiritual journey.

The Bible makes it clear that death, disease and decay were not a part of God's original design for humanity, but we live in a fallen world where sin has twisted God's design. We all suffer illness and pain, some more than others. We, as elders, had the privilege to pray and anoint with oil several individuals that reached out to us this past year.

The time to build was certainly evident this year for the Inyu family as construction began in July 2023 and concluded eight months later on their new Habitat for Humanity home. It was a joy to see the Salem community unite and support the Inyus by helping with the build over four volunteer days along with helping clean the house and coordinate stocking the house with food and supplies. This all culminated with the dedication of the house on March 27th, 2024. Salem also participated in the Habit for Humanity home kick-off, dedication and a pantry drive for the Amuri family this year.

The major restoration of our church building from damage due to a previous windstorm was completed. Through God's provision we were able to have the roof repaired, replace the gym floor, replace the damaged

soundboard, and complete a number of additional building improvements. The money provided from the insurance claim covered all costs associated and allowed us to put some back in capital funds. We have more updates to do and are pleased with the outlook for being able to accomplish those. Praise God for his provisions!

We completed an updated lease of the Fargo building with the Relevant Life Church. It is encouraging to have the building actively used for ministry and in a manner that reflects good stewardship of finances for Salem.

We give thanks to God for the increased giving and diligence on expenses by staff that enabled us to end 2023 in a solid financial position. This trend continues in 2024.

As we seek to lead well, several of the elders have stepped forward to periodically preach God's truths on Sunday mornings. We have also published a monthly Elder's Corner article to help keep people informed and offer Biblical encouragement. Additionally, we are actively engaging with ministry leaders to understand their needs, support them in prayer, and offer assistance wherever possible.

We say goodbye to elder's Pete Youlden and Thomas Inyu who have completed their terms and will not be extending. We thank them for their service. No new elders will be added at this time, but the elder board operates well with size remaining.

Returning to Ecclesiastes, "What do workers gain from their toil? I have seen the burden God has laid on the human race. He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. I know that there is nothing better for people than to be happy and to do good while they live. That each of them may eat and drink and find satisfaction in all their toil—this is the gift of God. I know that everything God does will endure forever; nothing can be added to it and nothing taken from it. God does it so that people will fear him." (Ecc 3:9-14). We are all in the business of laboring for God's eternal kingdom. Let us all seek him, in all we do, for his glory.