

Elders Corner, March 2022

Craig Jasperse writing. This is my first elder's corner... and my last! Roger Olson, Michael Carlson and I will step off the board come June. Through the nine years since Roger and I joined the board, God has been relentlessly faithful. I am so grateful for being a part of the Salem body; for together living lives of love; and for together pursuing the growth of God's kingdom in our individual lives, in Salem's life as a congregation, and in our outreach to others.

**Elder Nominations:** I am excited about four men who are moving forward through the early steps of the nomination process. Please be in prayer for both the nominating committee and for them.

**Questionnaire:** You have already received information from the pulpit and via email that an anonymous questionnaire is being conducted for both members and regular attenders, see link. [https://ndstate.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_2sp0NAVvIBPWB8i](https://ndstate.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_2sp0NAVvIBPWB8i). \*If\* you haven't already completed it, please do so! The structure and purpose of the questionnaire was the subject of considerable discussion and prayer by the elders. You will notice that it is primarily an effort to get a pulse on the spiritual vitality and habits of Salem's people. We hope that thoughtful completion of the questionnaire was a useful opportunity for individual self-reflection; that the collective insights gained will deepen understanding of the spiritual strengths and needs in our congregation; and that these insights will help the building up of Salem's body and vision.

**Men's Chili Cook-Off and Idea:** The elders have had several discussions about a potential initiative in which men would perhaps get involved in service projects. The possibilities are endless. Salem has a lot of men with both skills and with big hearts to make a difference, both within the Salem family and perhaps outside it as well. One of my favorite verses is Proverbs 3:27, "Do not withhold good ... when it is in your power to act," so I love the possibilities! Guys, could you be willing to come and help toss some ideas around? There will be a "**Men's Chili Cook-Off and Idea**" on Sunday March 27 at noon in the fellowship hall. We'd love to have men sign up and come: <https://salemeffc.org/mens-chili-cook-off>

**Visioning:** The elder board has continued its process of prayerfully trying to discern God's vision for how Salem can best serve God's kingdom in the times ahead. Included has been reading and discussing a book titled "Future Church", and going through an extended "class". (The "class" involves LOTS of homework and involves lots of discussion!).

**Rental?** As was mentioned during the March 13 service, another item that the elders have been praying about and discussing over recent months has been the possibility of renting the Fargo campus on a limited-duration basis. Obviously there have been a host of considerations. Is it good stewardship for that facility to be unused? How can God's kingdom be served best? How closely theologically aligned with Salem must a potential renter be? How long might a hypothetical rental agreement extend without impinging on Salem's possible effective usage of the facility in future? Could a potential renter cover the carrying costs of the facility? Thanks for your prayers already raised, and please continue to pray for wisdom and discernment in processing questions like these.

**Finances, and Parking Lot Loan:** Part of the rental discussion intersects with Salem's finances, as also mentioned during the May 13 service. Salem finances essentially have three fundamental

variables: budgeted giving (which is intended to match projected expenses for a year); actual giving; and actual expenses. In 2021, **both** giving and actual expenses came around \$100K below budget. Humanly speaking, it may not be wise to assume that actual expenses will consistently fall so far short of anticipated expenses! Another financial factor that the elders have discussed is that a loan, originally taken to pay for parking lot work at both campuses, expires this summer. That loan has ~\$150K due. Wouldn't it be great if Salem could erase (or shrink) that debt, and also knock the loan-payment expense off of Salem's annual budget? If you want to donate specifically toward reducing that debt, donate to the "Capitol Improvement" fund, which is distinct from the general fund.

**Shepherding:** In Exodus 18, Moses' father-in-law Jethro suggests having capable men connected with defined groups of people ("fifties and tens"). The elders have had several discussions and prayers about being more organized in their connection, awareness, prayer, and care for Salem members, both spiritually and in other ways. Part of the concept is that every Salem member would have a specific Salem elder who is praying for them on a regular basis; who is available to listen/support/encourage; and who would notice if a member "dropped out". Please pray for the elders that they may be faithful and organized in praying and caring for people of Salem.

In Luke 9:23, Jesus says: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." During this Easter season, may we daily trust the savior; daily repent; and daily take up our crosses as we follow our risen, life-giving Savior!

Craig Jasperse, on behalf of the Salem Elders