

The Stained Glass Window

Salem Presbyterian Church
www.salempresbyterian.org

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December 2011 Issue

Looking Ahead: Christmastide and Sunday School Kickoff

Dear Friends,

It has been a blessing to walk with you as we prepare our hearts and minds for the coming of Emmanuel. Our family loves this congregation. We are blessed to be a part of its life and warmth. Thank you for extending yourselves in love and hospitality toward us.

Looking ahead to the Twelve Days of Christmas: Richard Clark will be preaching on Christmas Day and Rev. Duane Aelick will be preaching on the Second Sunday of Christmas.

Our Baptism of the Lord Sunday (January 8th) will also be our Sunday School Kickoff! Vickie Saewert will begin teaching a Multi-aged Children's

Class which will be held from 9:30 a.m. -10:15 a.m. in the Library and Recreation Room on Sunday. Stay tuned as plans are also underway regarding an adult class. Prayerfully consider your calling in support of Spiritual Formation at Salem Presbyterian Church.

Advent blessings and Christmas peace!

Beth

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The Stained Glass Window

December 2011

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The Stained Glass Window newsletter is published monthly by the Communications Ministry of the Salem Presbyterian Church. The colors in the banner on the front of the newsletter are colors found in the church's own stained glass windows. The newsletter is distributed via email, postal service and personal delivery and is available in PDF format to read and/or download. It may also be found at the church Web site at www.salempresbyterian.org.

We welcome your ideas and submissions for the newsletter! Please contact Trina Brown about what you would like to see.

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A Conversation with Richard Clark

Richard Clark was born in Salem and has lived in Washington County most of his life. When he was 3 or 4 years old, his family moved to Boynton Beach in Florida, where his father worked on a chicken farm for about a year before the family moved back to Washington County to live in Pekin. Even though Richard was very young when he and his parents lived in Florida, he remembers having a good experience there. He also told me though that his family was so poor at the time that his mother would fry up chicken feet for them to eat. When the family moved back to Pekin, they lived in the old Gill house that was torn down in 2010 to construct the Dollar General store. His family was the last to have the house to themselves; it was turned into an apartment building when they moved out in 1963. Richard said “it was a very large house and spooky. Very spooky.”

Richard had been to various churches over the years before he and his wife Sharon found their church home at Salem Presbyterian. Richard started out as a member of the very conservative Church of Christ where he was baptized in 1975 at the age of 20. A cousin he was close to had become a member there a year earlier,

and Richard was looking for a church to serve as a stabilizing force in his life. He had always had an interest in religion.

Richard met for Bible study on one Wednesday night. One of the young people actively involved in the Salem Church of Christ at the time was Scott Colglazier, who has since returned to a Disciples of Christ theology and is now quite well-known, and it was Scott who asked Richard one evening if he was ready to accept Jesus Christ. Richard responded with an emphatic “yes” and was baptized on the spot – full immersion – with only a handful of people present. Richard described it as being “just like they did it in the New Testament. No fanfare. You get saved and you’re baptized that same night.”

While Richard’s theology has moved away from that of the Church of Christ, he really appreciated that he received a good grounding in scripture there. He said he learned the books of the Bible and what each book was about. Richard told me, “A lot of people think if you don’t take the Bible literally it’s not worth anything but you can take the Bible symbolically, metaphorically, and get a really good understanding

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A Conversation with Richard Clark (continued)

what the real meaning is behind the scripture.” He mentioned that as far back as the third century AD the great Christian theologian Origen believed that many things in the Bible cannot be interpreted literally and that you must go to the symbolic meaning to understand. Richard said that the people who wrote the Bible “didn’t look at history necessarily like we do. They were more interested in telling a story and the message behind the story was actually more important than a lot of the history.”

I asked Richard how his theology changed over time and he said he’d started to read works by Leroy Garrett, who was a member of the Church of Christ but was viewed as somewhat of a heretic there because he believed members of the church should interact with Christians of other denominations. Richard said, “He really got me thinking about different ways of looking at Christian fellowship and who our brothers and sisters are in Christ. And that sort of opened my mind. That was a crack in the door, so to speak.”

From there Richard went on to read works by a theologian named Paul Tillich, who caused Richard to look at scripture differently. Tillich is viewed by many as the greatest theo-



Photo by Vickie Saewert

logian of the 20th century. In Tillich’s view, Richard explained, “God is the ground of all being that we walk and have our existence in. He’s not something up in the sky but he is our sustenance and our ultimate reality. That’s hard for humans to understand but the best way we can understand God is through Jesus Christ.” Richard also read works of William Barclay, a Presbyterian, who said that Jesus Christ represents God’s attitude of love toward humankind

on Earth. Richard told me, “That’s why I believe and accept Jesus as my own personal savior. And I believe he did die for the sins of all humanity.”

Richard and Sharon attended the Church of Christ after they were married at Sharon’s church, Blue River Baptist, but Richard said there is no instrumental music at the Church of Christ and that it does not accept the baptism of the Baptist church as valid, so Sharon never became comfortable there and did not join the church. There was some subtle pressure on Richard by members of the church to persuade Sharon to join. They finally left that church and joined a small non-denominational church that met at the John Stevens Museum basement on Sundays. It was very first century in structure in the form of worship. There were no paid ministers and the members took turns speaking. Richard and Sharon attended this faith community for about a year, and then went through several years of being unchurched.

Then Sharon became pregnant with their first child, Uriah, and Richard thought it would be a good time to go back to church. They joined Old Blue River Christian Church, which is an independent Christian church in Washington County outside Salem. Richard said he believes it’s one of the oldest churches in the area, being founded in or around 1819. Richard became a deacon there and for both their children, Uriah and Ygrayne, it was the first exposure to religion. The family attended there from about 1985 to 1992 and by 1992, Richard’s theology

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Ministries

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A Conversation with Richard Clark (continued)

had changed so much he was no longer comfortable there with their very fundamentalist theology. He wrote a letter of resignation, which the pastor read in church, and Sharon and the children continued to attend there for a while after Richard stopped attending.

Richard told me he began looking for a more open-minded faith community, and he

found it a few months

later at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Jeffersonville,

Indiana. He was fascinated

by the Episcopal Church's emphasis on the Eucharist, which they have weekly.

Richard said it was a radically different type of worship service than he had been familiar with. The

priest, who was a woman, wore vestments and Richard really appreciated the significance of the Eucharist with real wine and everyone sharing a single chalice by going forward to the altar. Richard also said, "The sermons were very different from what I ever heard before, more socially engaged, with more emphasis on social justice."

Sharon and the children joined him there and Uriah and Ygrayne, then 9 and 6 years old respectively, were baptized there. Richard wanted to become more involved there but that was too difficult due to the distance they had to travel to attend. They could not afford to go there every Sunday and so eventually stopped going.

He was looking for a church "close by, preferably, that was very open to different ideas, very inclusive, and I had no idea there was a church like Salem Presbyterian within miles of where I lived. I thought I might have to go miles out of town."

Richard and Sharon had been invited to attend Salem Presbyterian Church originally by Susie Lopp, who was a friend of Sharon's family.

They didn't visit at that time but later, Richard and Sara Shields, who is Sharon's cousin by marriage, had a conversation about theology at Delaney Park, and Sara men-

tioned Paul Tillich. Richard said that clicked with him and he thought Salem Presbyterian sounded like a pretty open-minded church. A year or two later, Richard and Sharon came to Salem Presbyterian on Easter Sunday in 2002 and have been attending ever since.

Richard said at the time he was going through some personal problems. He'd been

hospitalized briefly for depression and really wanted to go back to church. He was looking for a church “close by, preferably, that was very open to different ideas, very inclusive, and I had no idea there was a church like Salem Presbyterian within miles of where I lived. I thought I might have to go miles out of town.”

In 2004 or 2005, when Richard was serving on the Session, Sara mentioned an opportunity to him that he was immediately interested in: the chance to study to become a Commissioned Lay Pastor (CLP). He had always wanted to attend a theological school but the cost had been prohibitive and here was a chance to experience something similar. He attended classes as part of the CLP program over two and a half years. They met for one weekend every two months at Pyoca and Richard describes it as one of the best experiences of his life. Excellent teachers came from the Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and the classes covered “Old Testament, New Testament, preaching, history of the church, Reformation history, things about the sacraments, and about everything you need to know about the Presbyterian faith.” About the time Richard was finishing his CLP studies he also returned to Indiana University Southeast after 30 years and earned a degree in Journalism.

Richard enjoys the worship service changes at Salem Presbyterian that Rev. Beth Walden-Fisher has brought and Beth’s sermons, especially the history she brings to them. He told me that most ministers in Washington County don’t wear vestments and he finds our church unique in that Beth does. He finds the wearing of vestments is “almost mystical” and it is something he really appreciates.

I asked Richard what he likes about the worship services now and he mentioned the service seems to flow smoother now. He told me, “Overall, I think we’re very lucky. I know when Sara left us a lot of long-time members said ‘well, it will probably be a year or more before we get another pastor.’ But we got Beth within six months. So we were very fortunate and I think the Holy Spirit was working with the search committee and it turned out just wonderful.” Richard went on to say he’s very glad to be a part of Salem Presbyterian Church.

Richard has experienced many special moments at Salem Presbyterian Church. When his father passed away in 2005, Richard was very touched that Salem Presbyterian immediately offered to have a dinner for the family. Richard said his family was really impressed and that they still talk about how great the

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A Conversation with Richard Clark (continued)

Presbyterian cooking was. By far the best moment was when he married his son Uriah and his wife-to-be Ashley Potts in April 2009. Richard said he was probably more nervous than the bride or groom, or than he had been any other time he'd ever preached, but that it came off really well. He said he told them they had to stay together because he was the one to marry them.

I asked Richard what he sees and dreams of for the future of Salem Presbyterian and he said he sees great potential in our faith community. He said the Three Guys Coat Drive is a very good outreach program and

that we need to do different things to reach out to different people. "We need to step outside our comfort zone and embrace other people who normally wouldn't be Presbyterians," Richard said. "This is essential if the Presbyterian Church USA is to survive." In the larger Presbyterian faith community, Richard believes there must be big changes soon and that the PCUSA will need to adapt to the times, reduce some of its hierarchy, become more decentral-

ized and make it easier for people to become involved. Richard told me that the largest group of people now are the unchurched and that we need to reach out to people who don't fit the Presbyterian stereotype "because there is a hunger in the human soul for something greater than yourself, this yearning for what we lack as human beings that can only be filled by the grace of God through Jesus Christ."

"...if you really go back to the meaning of the word 'salvation,' it means to be made whole, to heal. That's what Jesus was about, to make us whole people..."

Richard said that many people attend or join a church because it's viewed as the respectable thing to do but that it's very important to challenge the status quo as Jesus Christ did and to understand what Jesus did in

his own time. "Jesus didn't get crucified for doing charity," Richard said. "Jesus was crucified for living out a love that disrupted the social order. And people are not crucified for helping poor people. People are crucified for joining them." Richard told me he feels that the whole idea of salvation, of being saved, is misunderstood, that "if you really go back to the meaning of the word 'salvation,' it means to be made whole, to heal. That's what Jesus was about, to

make us whole people, to heal us of our illnesses, physical or mental or psychological or social. It's not a term talking about where you're going to be after you die."

Richard is so appreciative of the prayers and support from the members of the Salem Presbyterian faith community while his wife Sharon was in the hospital over the past six weeks. The day Sharon came home after 42 days away was the happiest day of his life. Richard said that Sharon's being in the hospital "undoubtedly was the most trying period of my life, just as difficult as when Uriah was in Iraq. It's been an experience that I never thought I'd have to go through. But it's always easier to experience something like this when you have faith in God and in Christ as your savior. That makes it much, much easier, and I don't know how I would have gotten through this if I hadn't had a church family and this relationship with God."

- Richard Clark was interviewed by Trina Brown. If you would like to interview a church member for the newsletter, would like to be interviewed, or have a suggestion for an interview, please contact Trina Brown at trinab@blueriver.net, or by phone at 883-5689.

Important December Dates

December 11th

Third Sunday of Advent

Progressive Dinner and Christmas Cantata

4:00 p.m.: Appetizers at the home of Tom & Leah Fihe

5:00 p.m.: Meal at the home of Carolyn & David Beck

6:30 p.m.: Cantata, "One Small Child," Sanctuary

7:30 p.m.: Dessert, Mariner Hall

The public is invited to the Cantata and the Dessert refreshments; the Progressive Dinner is for our church family.

December 14th

Advent Study on Ancient/Modern Prayer Practices, 6:30 p.m. in the church parlor.

December 18th

Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 21st

Advent Study on Ancient/Modern Prayer Practices, 6:30 p.m. in the church parlor.

December 24th

Christmas Eve Service at 7:00 p.m. led by Rev. Beth Walden-Fisher. Communion will be served.

December 25th

Christmas Day Worship Service at 10:30 a.m. led by Richard Clark with special music by Connie Kenninger.

December

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday
<p>4 Second Sunday of Advent. Communion will be served. Liturgist: Leah Fihe Communion elements: Ruby Davis Wilma & Lana Humphrey (883-5461), Coffee Hour contact people.</p>	<p>5 Ginger Morris' Birthday</p>	<p>6</p>
<p>11 Third Sunday of Advent. Progressive Dinner & Christmas Cantata. See details on previous page. Liturgist: Butch Terrell</p>	<p>12</p>	<p>13</p>
<p>18 Fourth Sunday of Advent. Liturgist: Maurice Godfrey</p>	<p>19</p>	<p>20</p>
<p>25 Christmas Day. Richard Clark will be leading the service. Liturgist: Anne Terrell Communion elements: Sharon Clark Nedra Hattabaugh's Birthday</p>	<p>26</p>	<p>27 Dan Apple's Birthday</p>
<p>January 1 New Year's Day. Rev. Duane Aelick will be leading the service. Communion will be served. Liturgist: Donna LaFollette Vickie and Jeff Saewert (967-8542), Coffee Hour contact people.</p>	<p>2</p>	<p>3 Ygrayne Clark's Birthday Joan Stingel's Birthday Esther Weir's Birthday</p>

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Choir Practice, 6:30 p.m.	2 Uriah Clark's Birthday Leslie Gilstrap's Birthday	3
7 Advent Study on Ancient/ Modern Prayer Practices, 6:30 p.m. in the church parlor.	8 Choir Practice, 6:30 p.m.	9	10
14 Advent Study on Ancient/ Modern Prayer Practices, 6:30 p.m. in the church parlor. Madison Grosvenor's Birthday	15 Choir Practice, 6:30 p.m.	16	17
21 Advent Study on Ancient/ Modern Prayer Practices, 6:30 p.m. in the church parlor. John Davis' Birthday	22 Choir Practice, 6:30 p.m. Jess Helsel's Birthday	23	24 Nancy Godfrey's Birthday
28	29	30	31
4	5	6	7 Erin McQuiddy Howard's Birthday

Our Mission Statement

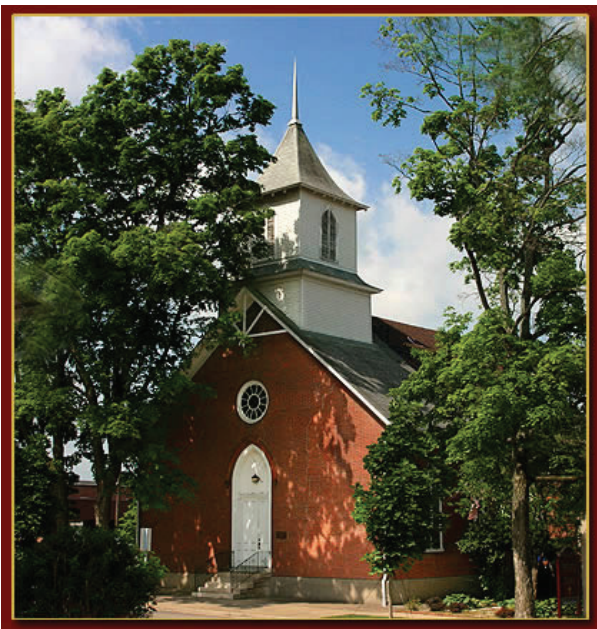
Understanding that grace is a gift from God to the world, to us.....

The Mission of the Salem Presbyterian Church is to support our church family in fostering growth in the Christian faith, in leading meaningful lives, and in doing good works to the glory of God.

To do justice, to love kindness, and to walk humbly with God.

Micah Chapter 6, Verse 8

**Salem Presbyterian Church
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