

Touched By Love

By Tom Hux

Ideas From Churches, September 2024

Our Savior's Lutheran Church



Guided by:

- Grace
- Love
- Truth

Our Savior's Lutheran Church – Salem, Oregon

Guided by God's Word

Our Savior's is a congregation of people who have been touched by the love of God through Jesus Christ. We encourage, support, and equip each other to respond to God's grace by loving God and loving others. We have no illusions that we do this perfectly, but by the Holy Spirit we seek to live faithfully to our Lord, confessing our failings and continually surrendering our lives to the One who gave Himself for us.

In doing this, there are three passages from God's Word that guide us. Beginning with the words of our Lord Jesus Himself in Matthew 25, where Jesus tells the penetrating parable of the separating of the sheep from the goats. Next, the First Letter of John asks a very personal question based on Jesus' teaching, followed by the powerful, simple summary of what our Lord asks of us in Galatians 6:2.

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.”

— Matthew 25:35-36

“If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person?”

— 1 John 3:17

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

— Galatians 6:2

Good Stewards

To help us as a congregation be good stewards of the gifts entrusted to us, our congregation has made the commitment for decades to be a tithing congregation. If we are going to ask our members to be faithful in their tithes and offerings, we should likewise be faithful as a church, tithing from the gifts we receive. If we are asking our members to give their “first fruits” and not their leftovers, as a community of believers we try to model that as well, giving ten percent of our monthly offering — not after all the other bills are paid, but as our congregational first fruits.

Two groups within our congregation are entrusted with dispersing our congregational tithe. The Local/Global committee and our Executive committee. While we have regular commitments to the [NALC](#) and [Lutheran World Relief](#), we prayerfully share with ministries in our own area, in our own country, and around the world. Some ministries have a more evangelical focus, others seek to care for the physical needs of our neighbors. We love supporting ministries that faithfully do both!

Ministries We Support

In our local community, with financial and volunteers we support ministries that address the need Jesus spoke about. We partner with [Habitat for Humanity](#) and [Family Promise](#) to respond to the need for safe, affordable housing and to prevent homelessness. We support our county’s

food bank and have “Food on the First” on the first Sunday of each month to receive food offerings to share.

Family Promise, where homeless families live in churches, a week at a time, and are fed breakfasts and dinners.



Food on the First Monthly food offering

For almost thirty years, our congregation’s prison ministry team has led worship and provided fellowship and support for inmates at the Oregon State Penitentiary. Flowing from that ministry, we have partnered with a ministry for children of incarcerated parents called, Agape Youth Camps, and years ago started the Foster Parents Night Out ministry.



Ministry at the Oregon State Penitentiary



Praying with prison inmate before baptism



Ten men were baptized that night earlier this year!

As with all congregations, Covid challenged us in many ways, but God stirred creativity and opportunity, jumpstarting us into the online worship world, months of outdoor worship services, and my personal favorite, “Little Church,” where for three hours every Sunday morning and two hours a day, Monday through Friday, a pastor would meet people by their cars and have a very personal time of checking in, prayer, and celebrating Holy Communion together.



Prior to the Covid crisis, we sponsored annual youth and adult mission trips, serving in [Mexico](#), [Guatemala](#), [Brazil](#), [South Africa](#), [Jamaica](#) and numerous places in our own country in response to natural disasters. With Covid behind us, we have resumed mission trips, traveling to Louisiana and Kentucky. In addition to mission trips, internationally we have financially supported churches, missionaries, and ministries all over the world.

From Random to Focused Ministry Support

Honestly, while our congregation has been faithful and generous in sharing our offerings, we have often erred in being rather random. This has given us the freedom to be spontaneous and respond to needs and opportunities as they arise, but this practice has prevented us from establishing consistent, ongoing partnerships. This year, we have decided to focus our support, giving monthly to Pastor Sam in Cambodia through Awakening Lives to World Mission (ALWM), and to support a missionary leader and training base with Youth With A Mission (YWAM) in Curitiba, Brazil.

Guided by those Biblical principles mentioned above, our congregation has been blessed in so many ways by being willing to partner with individuals and organizations that love our Lord Jesus and want to help people. By prayerfully seeking to serve Jesus, we have experienced the excitement and creativity of what God has inspired from within our own congregation. We have also been blessed immeasurably by partnering with people and ministries more experienced and better equipped to do what we cannot, and to reach more people with the love of Jesus than we could reach on our own.

God is so good and so faithful. As the Apostle Paul prays in Ephesians:

“Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

— Ephesians 3:20-21

What we offer to Jesus, God blesses, grows and magnifies beyond what we can imagine!



Pastor Tom Hux has been a pastor for 33 years, 5 years at a three-point parish on the prairies of north central Montana and for 28 years in various roles at Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Salem, Oregon. He and his wife, Brenda, have three sons, and three grandchildren. He has a passion for the foundational teaching of the Christian faith and seeing people drawn closer to Jesus through them.. He enjoys family and friends, creative writing, movies, diving, and crabbing on the Oregon coast.

Contact Pastor Tom at: tomh@oursaviorssalem.org

Links:

Our Savior's: <https://www.oursaviorssalem.org/>

NALC: <https://thenalc.org/>

Lutheran World Relief: <https://lwr.org/>

Habitat for Humanity: <https://www.habitat.org/>

Family Promise: <https://www.familypromisemwv.org/>

Agape Youth Camps: <https://agapefamiliesoregon.org/>

Foster Parents Night Out:

<https://everychildoregon.org/get-involved/volunteer/foster-parents-night-out/>

Mexico: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Mexico>

Guatemala: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Guatemala>

Brazil: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Brazil>

South Africa: <https://www.britannica.com/place/South-Africa>

Jamaica: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Jamaica>

Pastor Sam: <https://www.alwm.org/cambodia>

Cambodia: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Cambodia>

ALWM: <https://www.alwm.org/>

YWAM: <https://ywam.org/>

Curitiba: <https://www.britannica.com/place/Curitiba>