

I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;

I will counsel you and watch over you. . .

COPING WITH LOSS

Recently, we have been discussing in church the possibility of relocating Salem to a different, larger, more visible location. We do not yet know with finality whether this is the Lord's will for us, and we do not yet know when or even if this will happen!

However, if this were to happen, for many who have made their home on Salem hill for many years, it would feel like a loss.

We face so many losses in life! How can we cope?



A few weeks ago, our family lost its best dog ever. Everyone loved Bogie (OK, we didn't love the fur all over everything.) He was like Mary Poppins - practically perfect in every way! And now, he's gone. And there is a hole in our family. And in our home. Every time we come home, we still expect he'll be waiting at the door. He isn't.

Over the years of my life time, I have had to say goodbye to my father, Howard Page. That was when I was just a little over ten years old. I didn't know what to make of it or what to do. Then I lost both my grandparents in rapid succession. And the family German Shepherd, Jeff. Then as I was graduating high school, mother decided to sell the great old house I grew up in and leave the neighborhood that I loved, to move to a new place. Another loss.

I married Debbie, which was a big gain. Over the years, however, we have lost a baby to miscarriage, a wonderful and historic great grandmother 'Corvia Christian' died at age 101, all four of her grandparents, and her father Donald Alamo, who was a member here at Salem briefly. My mother Nancy died a few short weeks before I came to Salem. Moving to Chambersburg was a loss, because we were in a church family in upstate New York whom we loved, and who deeply loved us.

I could go on and on and on. If we live long enough, we face losses. How do we cope? How do we get through? How do we envision what the Lord is trying to accomplish in us when we face losses?

Here are a few rather random thoughts on the subject:

- 1) **The Lord walks with us.** Perhaps this is why, so often during times of turbulence and trouble, we turn to the 23rd Psalm: *Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.*

Well! Those are some pretty good questions, and statements. The overall theme is that for vast numbers of people, Christianity has become a movement of hypocrisy, judgment and offense, rather than a movement of grace, forgiveness, and love.

I'll admit it - the church isn't perfect, in that it is filled with people. And people, by nature, sin. And offend. And have strong opinions. And disagreements. And sometimes, forget to love. And sometimes, we forget that we were sinners once, and we work to exclude those who now stuck are in the muck mire of intentional sin. We refuse to help them, easier to judge and condemn them.

This leaves open that question: what kind of Christians do we want to be, at Salem?

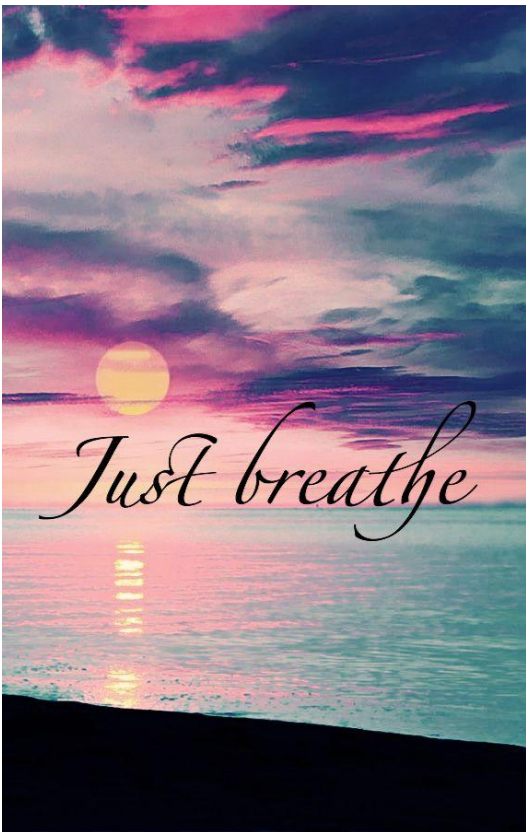
I think we have come a VERY LONG WAY in that regard. I have seen it. I have seen growth in grace. I have seen growth in our willingness to include those who are 'different' in our ranks. I have seen growth in our ministry to people from other races, ethnicities. I have seen us trying to love those suffering from same sex attraction. I have seen us trying to walk with families of prisoners, and to include ex-convicts in our ranks. Because they can belong to the Lord too.

So, let's keep it up. Keep reading scripture, particularly the teachings of Jesus. Why those, especially?

Several reasons:

- 1) **Jesus told us to.** Matthew 28:19-20: ***Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.***
- 2) **The Gospels.** The gospels are where we find Jesus teaching us what it means to be His REAL (authentic) followers, and not hypocrites, or the Pharisees of today (e.g. looks good on the outside, rotten on the inside!)

May He bless you as you seek to be more and more like Him!



PHIL STOLTZFUS - BREATHE IN PEACE!

Ordinarily, when someone passes on, we say, 'Rest in peace.' But I would wish Phil to BREATHE in peace. Breathing has been such a struggle for Phil for much of the last 17 years, since contracting COPD. I remember years ago, before the lung transplant, Phil drove me home from his house (I had left my car there) and I was just praying he wouldn't pass away in the truck - he was really struggling and working HARD for every single breath.

Harnessed to oxygen tanks or stuck home tied to an oxygen machine, Phil wasn't able to get out much for the last year or so. He has been set free from all of that. What is compromised and imperfect in this life, becomes whole and perfect in heaven.

I will miss Phil. He was such a good man! He was willing, when able, to do anything for anyone. He helped me in lots of ways. Working on my car projects. Giving me advice. Plowing my driveway when no one else would or could. He was special. A great husband, a great father, a great friend, and in later years, a great friend of Christ.

Let me share with you the arrangements for the services which are in his honor and to give glory to God:

Wednesday, March 22:

† Visitation at Geisel Funeral Home, 6:00 - 8:00 PM

Thursday, March 23:

- † Visitation at Geisel Funeral Home, 10:30 AM
- † Celebration of Life Service, Geisel, 11:30 AM
- † Internment Service, Lincoln Cemetery
- † Luncheon at Salem Community Center, probably around 1:30 PM

Please pray for and encourage Keah, and Kellan, and Melissa in all the ways you can. Thanks!

And remember, as Christians, we are not to fear death. The Apostle Paul wrote: ***"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."***

THURSDAY, MARCH 23: SALEM PROPERTY Q&A MEETING



Tomorrow evening, Thursday, March 23, we are having the second 'ALL CHURCH MEETING' to continue our work of discerning the Lord's will for us as relates our property. There is the potential for us to one day relocate, an option which we did not believe was open to us. So, the Salem Board invites you to come, and bring your questions and concerns. Please approach this prayerfully, as a time of discernment. We really need to seek the Lord's direction in how to overcome some physical, geographic, and aesthetic conditions at our present site which may present limitations to our ability to attract new families and minister effectively and fruitfully in the future. The meeting will be held from 7 to 9 PM in the Sanctuary.

SATURDAY, MARCH 25: LADIES 'RISE AND SHINE' BREAKFAST

Well, I have seen evidence that the ladies are getting ready for their special breakfast, this Saturday, March 25. It will be held in the Salem Community Center. It all starts at 9 AM, so ladies, plan on coming, experiencing a delightful breakfast, and fellowship with your sisters in Christ!

SATURDAY, MARCH 25: FARM HANDS Gospel Concert.

We haven't had one of these in years - a great Gospel Concert! And this will be a GOOD ONE, since the bluegrass quartet is coming straight from Nashville Tennessee, and has won many music awards! Starts at 7:00 PM on Saturday, March 25 as an outreach of our church (that means, reach out and invite your neighbors and friends to sample the goodness of the Lord here at Salem!) There will be a free-will offering to support the cost of having the group come. Come yourself, be blessed, bring someone special!



SALEM PRAYER CORNER . . . Please be in prayer for

✠ Surgery and Hospital Stays:

- Gerald Rosenberry, Manor Care
- Cindy Leisher, recovery from surgery

✠ Adjusting to losses

- Jay & Lu Alleman - for Jonathan (prison)
- Jeana Wilmot's mother, dementia
- Stoltzfus family - loss of Phil

✠ Suffering from pain, discomfort, illness, treatment

- Lori Hogue, swelling behind optic nerve
- Julianna Shubert, ongoing disorder
- Frank Gaugler - blood transfusions
- Dezirae Rohrer, chemo treatments

- Bob Paxton - heart and stomach trouble
- Lorie Helman - future hip replacement
- Doris Guyer, heart issues, CDIF, blood loss
- Curt Poper - recovery from foot surgery
- Dwight Kuntz - multiple myeloma
- Brandon Kissinger, Chiari Malformation
- Sharon Young - cancer care
- Ray Bricker, Parkinsons

✠ Travel Mercies

- Eileen Brenize, Karina Lehman, Haiti
- Roy College's grandchild Elizabeth

LAST WORDS: GAINS AND LOSSES

Gains and losses. Interesting concept. Makes me think of investments. Debbie and I will not receive a pension from anyone or anywhere. Most people don't get those anymore, only government workers. Social security is at risk. Our future will be covered by 1) continuing to work, 2) our investments. And in investing, there have been a lot of ups and downs, gains and losses. Frustrating! Don't you wish life could be all ups, and all gains?

Well, sadly, it doesn't seem to work that way for most of us. There are gains and losses.

The good news is, when we are in Christ, at the end of our race through this life, there is a big UP. A big GAIN. We are going up! Up to heaven! Which is a good place. The apostle John, writing the book of revelation, saw it this way:

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. 2 I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. 3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

Let us look forward together to that day, when we get to experience the beauty of heaven!



Blessings to all, Pastor Art