

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH MESSENGER

CALLED TO WORSHIP / COMMITTED TO SERVE / CONNECTED IN FAITH

December 2020

A monthly Publication of
St. John Lutheran Church

Worship Schedule

Saturday night
worship at 6:00 p.m.
In Gathering Area

Sunday Worship 9:00 a.m.

Pastors

Pastor Mark Johnson
Pastor Sarah Timian

Office Staff

Jillmarie Stich
Audrey Zellman

Treasurer

Rae Fimon

Custodians

Curt & Cheryl Johnson

Organists

Eileen Hanlon
Diane West

Choir Director

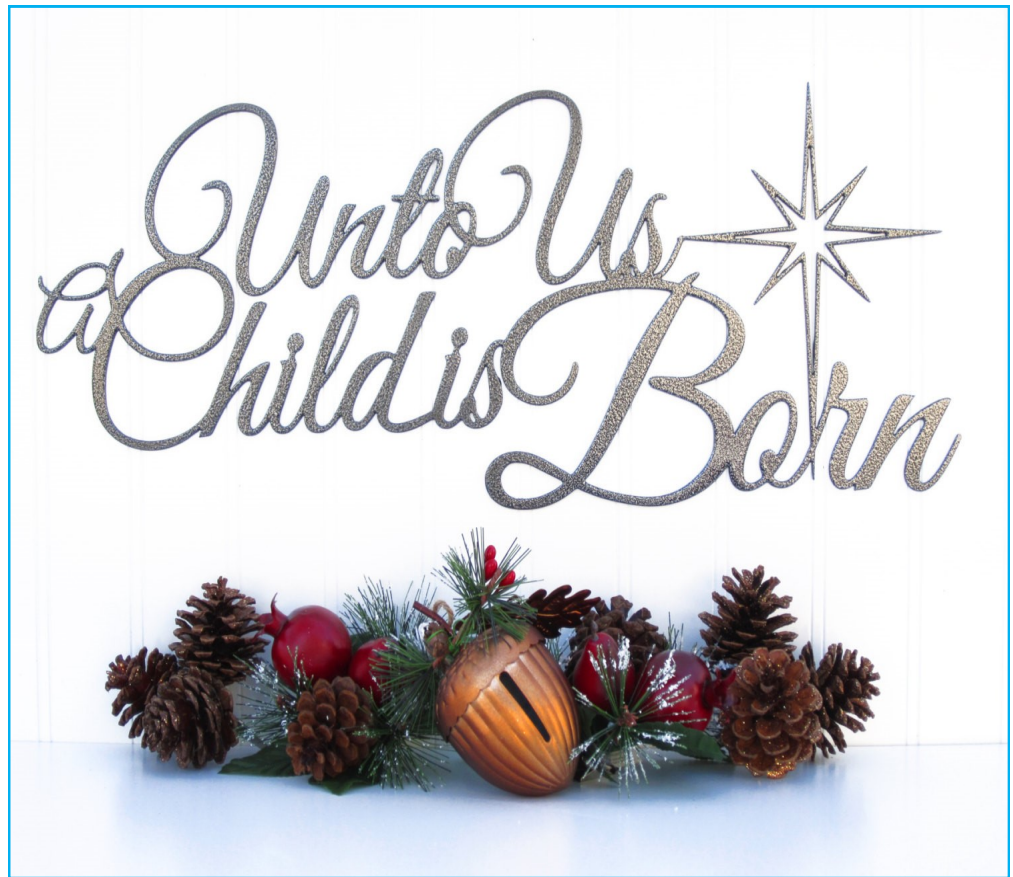
Bri Bergstrom

Accompanist

Sheila Schmidt

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- Christmas Toy Project for 2020
- Closing Financial Books for 2020
- 2021 Annual Meeting Information

From Pastor Mark

“Now is the winter of our discontent...” So goes the opening line of William Shakespeare’s play “Richard III,” and perhaps this is a fitting summary and encapsulation of our collective state of mind as we enter into this cold, dark and frosty time of year. Discontent. Disconnectedness. Disorientation. Uncertainty. Hope. Despair. Longing.

This is certainly understandable. The comfortable routine of our lives has been upended by the pandemic we are living through. As I write this, I am just coming off of quarantine for testing positive for the virus. I’m not sure how I contracted it. I had chills, ache, fatigue and nausea but no temperature or respiratory issues. And, of course, my story is simply one thread sewn into the great quilt of which we are all a part. And so we wait and wonder together how things will unfold.

This is certainly part of our faith, as well. The Psalms contain many passages of people struggling, individually and collectively, through difficult times and lifting up voices to God of lament and hope. It is good to know that we are part of a story that is much larger than we are and that we share, as pilgrims on this journey, with those who have gone before us. Others have made it through their dark night of the soul, and we will, too. And we take comfort in knowing that, no matter what happens, we are held in the large and loving hands of a compassionate God who knows our sufferings deeply and intimately and who loves us beyond our understanding.

Of course, we endure such times of trial and testing. But more than simply enduring, we also do well to ask what good may come out of this. There are probably a few things, if we allow ourselves to ponder. One thing is that we are being made to see what we know but often times repress and refuse to think about. And that is that life is not our property or possession or project but a gift from God, beautiful, fragile and fleeting. And, if absence makes the heart grow fonder, we have come to appreciate even more that our life is not about our things but about our relationships. Faith, family and friends are the true treasures of life.

December is also a time of transition here at St. John. Pastor Sarah has accepted a call to a church in Massachusetts and so her last day with us will be Sunday, December 6. I want to thank Pastor Sarah for her time here and for the blessing that she has been to our congregation. She will be a solo pastor in her next call and so she embarks on a new adventure. On behalf of the entire congregation we wish her godspeed and every good blessing as she enters into her new call. All the best to you, Sarah!

We will, of course, be taking some time to pause and consider things here at St. John. I would hope that the coming year provides us with an opportunity to engage in some intentional strategic planning that would include our mission and ministry, our staffing needs, the best use of our property, etc. With the pandemic, we are not able to engage the congregation in as thorough a way as this process deserves right now to listen, receive input and work through a process of discernment together. But I am hopeful that the coming year will provide such an opportunity.

Fittingly, I suppose, we are also entering the Season of Advent, a season marked by waiting, longing, praying, anticipation and hope. As we enter into the darkest time of the year, we prepare our hearts to celebrate the birth of the Light of the World. The darkness is real. But we remember, as John writes in his gospel, that “the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness is not able to overcome it.”

Light is stronger than darkness. Love is stronger than hate. Life is stronger than death. This is our hope. This is our faith. This is the foundation that we stand upon through such uncertain times as these.

And so may you have a blessed Advent that allows you to see beyond the present and fleeting circumstances and opens you to embrace the hope and certainty that is ours through Christ Jesus, our Lord. To him be all the honor and glory! Thanks be to God!

Free Will Missionary Offering December 13

At St. John we regularly pray for and also help to financially support an ELCA Missionary, Elisabeth Johnson, who serves in the African country of Cameroon. Each year we take a special free-will offering. This year, despite the pandemic, we will also be doing so. We will have a special offering basket available at the church on the weekend of Dec. 12 & 13. However, recognizing our present reality and that many of us are not physically present in worship these days, it is important to also offer the opportunity to mail a check to the church. Please make the check out to “St. John” and put “Missionary Offering” on the memo line so we can designate it properly. We have \$2,000 scheduled in our budget for support for our Missionary, so let’s all be generous in providing our free-will support of Elisabeth and her Missionary work. Thank you!

From Pastor Sarah

16 November 2020

Dear Members of St. John,

This letter is to inform you that I have received and accepted a new call to The Lutheran Church of Our Redeemer in Foxboro, Massachusetts. My final day at St. John will be Sunday, December 6, 2020.

The first Newsletter Article I wrote for St. John talked about arriving and unpacking—what we bring to a new place and how that is incorporated into what is already here. It seems appropriate that this letter then talk about packing—what we take with us when we leave.

Packing is definitely a process. It's one that I've been through a few times. I know that there is always some sorting to do, and there are decisions about what to keep, what to give away, and what to let go of entirely.

There are things that never change—I pack my kitchen into the same plastic totes every time, and everything fits just as it always has. There are pieces of me that I brought here that I will take with me. There are skills and talents I developed before I arrived that have stayed with me through the years, and there are things that will remain unchanged at St. John as well.

There are things that will be different than what I originally brought. Some appliances and tools have been replaced with newer models, and I have accumulated new items, too. There are lessons I have learned through trial and error, and people whose ideas and perspectives I have come to understand and appreciate. I know I have grown through these experiences, and my own perspective has changed through them.

There are things that I will leave behind. I will need to sort through the things I put into the moving boxes—books and decorations and such. Some will be donated or left for whoever finds them. It will not be up to me what happens with them anymore. I've written lessons and liturgies while here, and I've spent time and energy on various events, mission trips, visits, and volunteer work. Just as I encountered stories, ideas, and traditions left by those before me, I realize that what I've contributed will be up to the congregation to incorporate or discontinue.

I also know that I may not yet realize what I bring along, either. Just like that item you forgot about until you start unpacking, I am sure that certain lessons and memories will pop up at unexpected times.

As I leave St. John, I hope that this next phase is a step forward for all of us that is guided by the Holy Spirit and lived out in our lives. I pray that we both work to grow faithfully into whatever is next.

Sincerely,

Pastor Sarah K. Timian



Mark it on Your Calendar!

January 24, 2021 will be St. John's Annual Congregational Meeting

With guidance from the Synod the council will conduct a Zoom (virtual) annual meeting. Information on how the meeting will work will be sent to the congregation between Christmas and New Years. Information needed back to church will be: Indicating how many voting members will be present, and providing email for Zoom link. Members will have 3 options to RSVP (return postcard, call church office OR email church). Watch for continuous communication regarding the annual meeting from the council.

Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes
November 19, 2020

President Matt Stier called the meeting to order at 6:34 p.m.

Present:

	Pastor Mark	x	Pastor Sarah	X	Matt Stier		
X	Angie Kahle	x	Rae Fimon	X	Albert Koepp	X	Wendy Theis
	Mya Holzemer		Sue Koenig	X	Chris Zellman		Chris Stier
	Bob Fairbanks	X	Curt Johnson	X	Jennifer Nagorski		

Opening Devotions: Pastor Sarah shared opening devotions - Psalm 95;1-7

Approval of Minutes: Members of Council reviewed the minutes from the September 24, 2020 Council Meeting with the following change in wording related to the continuing resolution: *This congregation may hold meetings by remote communication, including electronically and by telephone conference, as long as there is an opportunity for simultaneous aural communication. Notice of all meetings may be provided electronically.*

Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes with this addition.

Pastor Mark's Report:
No Report this month

Pastor Sarah's report:

Pastor Sarah provided the council with her letter of resignation. She will also be mailing a copy out to members of the congregation. Pastor Sarah has requested an exit interview from the personnel committee. On December 6th there will be a special liturgy with Pastor Sarah as her last service with the congregation.

Staff Report: Custodial Updates:

Curt let the council know that the back elevator is in need of some service. The council discussed possibly taking the elevator offline instead of paying the cost to replace parts for \$1000-\$1500. Curt said it was possible but the State of MN would need to be notified first. Curt will check into the cost of completely removing the elevator. The cooling fan in the attic is fixed, some lights and outlets have been repaired. There are some minor things that need to be fixed in the rentals. Curt has also repaired the snowblower broom. Curt has also said the glass is being replaced using the lift borrowed from Matt Kes. the council discussed giving Matt something for allowing the church to use the lift and operating cost.

Treasurer:

Rae presented the October financial reports. The General Fund, Building fund and General operating fund were reviewed.

Transfers:

Transfers In

1. John Busse is transferring from the First Presbyterian church in Belle Plaine.
2. Deanne and James Fogarty and their children, Wyatt and Gavin, are transferring from Zion Lutheran church in Cologne.

Transfers out - none

Motion Was made to approve the transfers in, Seconded and carried.

Ongoing Business

Annual Meeting - January 24th, 2021

1. To hold the meeting the council will conduct a Zoom (virtual) meeting
2. The council will practice the process with the council and committee members on December 17th to work out issues. An invite will be sent to all council committee members (Stewardship, Buildings and Grounds, Personnel, Children's ministry, Small Group/faith formation, Worship and Music, Technology and Festivals)
3. Postcards will be sent to the congregation. Information needed back to church will be: Indicating how many voting members will be present, and providing email for Zoom link. Members will have 3 options to RSVP (return postcard, call church office OR email church) Office will keep track of info. Cards will be sent after Christmas between Christmas and the New Year. Along with continuous communication to the congregation regarding the annual meeting.
4. The council will determine how best to track votes during the meeting. Giving members a red and green card was one option. Possibly providing a link to a survey type response was another.
5. All of council will be in attendance in the gathering area on annual meeting day

The council discussed connecting with some members who have knowledge of technology and tech support.

New Business

Election of new council members - There are 4 total seats to fill on the council. Three 3 year terms and one 1 year term. The nominating committee and pastor Mark have begun to get this process going.

Pastor Sarah's resignation - The council made a motion to approve Pastor Sarah's resignation, seconded and carried.

Call for a new pastor - The council began discussion of this process, but no decisions have been made yet.

Budget - Rae presented the budget outlook for 2021. The council had discussion but did not vote to approve the budget. A vote will take place during the December meeting.

Ministry Team Updates

Stewardship Committee - nothing new

Buildings and Grounds Committee - nothing new

Personnel Committee - nothing new

Children's Ministry Team - Wendy mentioned some updates from the Childrens ministry and asked the council to think about the direction we would like the children's ministry team to go during January and beyond. Since schools are going to Distance Learning, what direction would the council like to have the children's ministry team to go? The council had some discussion and a few ideas and shared them with Wendy.

Small Group/Faith Formation Committee - nothing new

Worship and Music Committee - Has met and will meet again on December 2nd to discuss Christmas services.

Technology and Communications Committee - nothing new

Festivals Committee - nothing new

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn at 9:00pm. Meeting was adjourned followed by the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Angie Kahle, Secretary

Looking for Ushers:



We are in need of ushers to fill teams. Historically we had "8:00 AM" teams (early service) and "10:30 AM" teams (late service). With the current COVID-19 pandemic we currently only have 1 service on Sunday morning with an additional evening drive in service on Saturday evening. Currently both teams are covering all services. We are especially in need of ushers on the "10:30 AM" late service teams. If you are interested contact the church office or contact Brent Koepf, Head Usher at 612-860-0386 (email koepfbw@frontiernet.net) or Andy Steinhagen, Assistant Head Usher at 612-581-7523 (email suesimcox@yahoo.com).

Thank You for your service!



Christmas Plans for this December

As we all know, it is no ordinary year. At this writing, the coronavirus is expanding exponentially all over the nation and one of the hot spots is Minnesota. Schools are responding by going to distance learning. Businesses are having to reinforce distancing. We are all in this together.

When the pandemic broke out in March, none of us were really anticipating that it would last this long. We hoped that, maybe by Fall, it would be over. But as we have lived with it, we realize that it is a longer prospect. And, as a congregation, we agreed that we would abide by rules that allow us to keep each other as safe as we can. And so we have limited our gatherings and have enforced masks and distancing. And it seems that we will for some time to come.

That said, plans are still taking shape for our celebration of Christmas this year. At this point, we are looking at two ways of doing this:

A Special Recorded Christmas Service Online

Our Worship Team is looking at recording a special Christmas service, including elements of Word and Song, that we will post online to be available for families to view and worship together at their convenience. Watch for more details on this.

A Live Christmas Event

We are still in the planning stages of hosting a live Christmas Eve event where people can join us in their car or can gather outdoors in a safe and socially distanced way for a brief time of sharing the Christmas story together. Dan Schmidt has offered his farm as a lovely location for this event. Details are still being worked out so keep an eye out as they develop.

"Tis the Season of Giving" Christmas Toy Project— 2020

The Belle Plaine Police Department and The Belle Plaine Rotary Club are coordinating the "Tis the Season of Giving" Christmas Toy Project in Belle Plaine. The plan is to distribute all toys locally. If there are more then needed, they will be donated to other locations.

St. John is a drop off location. There is a box in the entrance for donations. Gifts are accepted for children up to 17 years of age.

Donations will be accepted until December 22 at 12p.m.

If you know of a family in need of help, please notify the Belle Plaine Police at 952-873-4307 and they will get in touch with the family.

Please help those in need in our community.



Did you know your purchases can make a difference?

AmazonSmile donates to St John Lutheran Church when you do your holiday shopping at

smile.amazon.com/ch/41-0802698



Support our youth this Season Need a gift idea?

Give the gift that fits everyone. Deadline for special order Scrip cards if Dec. 13. Email Kirk Franck at kirkamy@frontiernet.net with your order. Cards can also be picked up at the church during office hours.

Financial Books Closing for 2020

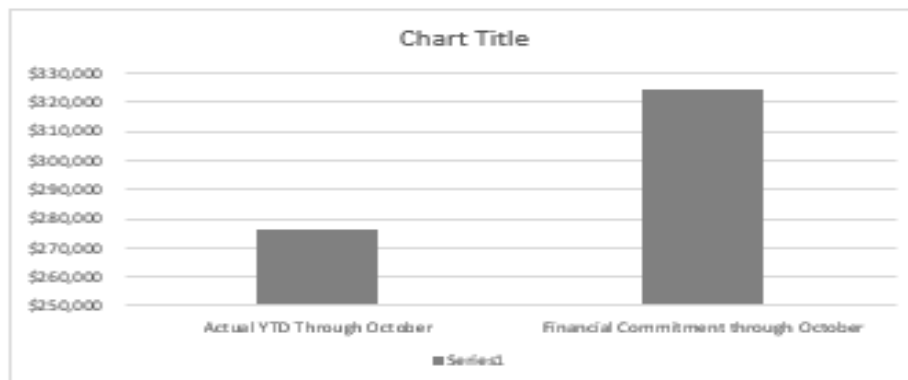
It has been an unusual year, to say the least. Thank you for your support through these unusual and trying times. December has always typically been a good month for offerings at the church. This year things are a little different. Christmas will arrive and we plan to celebrate, although our celebration will necessarily be a little different this year. Check out the accompanying article on that.

Through all the ups and downs and uncertainties of life, we are blessed to share together in a community of faith. We pray for God's continued leading and guiding into the future, that we might be blessed to be a blessing.

If you are able, please provide our faith community with a generous gift of financial support so that we can end this year strong and make a good beginning on next year. Your support is needed and appreciated! Thank you!

St. John Financial Results Ten Months Ended October 31, 2020 and October 31, 2019

General Operating Fund			Year Over Year Increase (Decrease)
	October 31, 2020	October 31, 2019	
Income	\$ 276,305	\$ 301,376	-8%
Paycheck Protection Loan Forgiveness	54,839	-	
Expenses:			
Personnel	(247,442)	(254,058)	
Office	(15,427)	(14,236)	
Property & Maintenance	(33,945)	(31,283)	
Ministry Teams	(14,917)	(18,687)	
Other	(3,031)	(4,138)	
Benevolence:			
Minneapolis Area Synod	(10,000)	(10,000)	
Camp Onomia	(2,500)	(2,500)	
World Hunger (2019)	(250)	-	
Lutheran Social Services	(2,000)	(1,500)	
Net Receipts / (Expenditures)	<u>\$ 1,632</u>	<u>\$ (35,026)</u>	
Cash Balance at January 1 (excl. all loans)	\$ (84,836)	\$ (64,346)	
Net Income / (Expenditures)	1,632	(35,026)	
Misc. cash not affecting income	(1,237)	184	
Loan from Building Fund (from 2018 & 2019)	45,500	54,500	
Loan from St. John Foundation (from 2014-2016)	54,159	53,620	
Cash Balance at October 31	<u>\$ 15,218</u>	<u>\$ 8,932</u>	
Building Fund			
Receipts	84,514	\$ 113,955	-26%
Miscellaneous Expenses	-	(124)	
(Loaned to)/Received from General Fund	10,000	(19,500)	
Principal	(96,646)	(91,603)	
Interest	(8,954)	(13,997)	
Net Receipts / (Disbursements)	<u>\$ (11,086)</u>	<u>\$ (11,269)</u>	
Loan Balance at January 1	\$ 325,224	\$ 435,544	
Principal Payments	(96,646)	(91,603)	
Loan Balance at October 31	<u>\$ 228,578</u>	<u>\$ 343,941</u>	
Actual Income Compared to 2020 Financial Commitment:			
Actual YTD Through October	\$ 276,305		
Financial Commitment through October	\$ 324,324		



December 2020



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		Rick Olson Robert Stoppelmann	Darwayne Dandurand Erik Hoff Joyce Nyblom Andy Steinhagen Nicole Walker Jaydn Williamson	Debra Brazil Bob Fairbanks Luke Fogarty Diane Gerres	Kyle Arola Dominick Fogarty Lois Gustafson Peggy Malz Alexander Meger Bob Trost	Dylan Johnson Randal Kruger John Schmidt Sarah Timian
Zachary Fahey Michael Gustafson Tristan Lindahl	Troy Borresen Allen Latour Tyson Menke Ruby Schultz	8	9	10	11	12
Ethan Martin Zachary Olson	Laura Buddenhagen Jeffery Burkman Taylor Fimon Alexander Johnson	15	16	17	18	19
Katey Borresen Laura Costello Duane Koepp Hoyt Nagorski Kevin Wolff	Steven Gerres Adam Meierbachtol Kevin Nyblom	22	23	24	25	26
Mikayla Anderson Garrett Boblitt Daniel Buertkle Thor Einertson Makenna Gerres Morgan Hagen Kari Laue Callen Petty	Cooper Stier	29	30	31		
		Jan Campbell Madison Theis	Bob Fimon Deborah Traxler	Parker Borresen Mason Gerres Luke Meriwether Chris Schultz	Lori Schmidt Madelyn Siekmann	Donald Oldenburg Carissa Schultz Trever Theis