

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH MESSENGER

CALLED TO WORSHIP / COMMITTED TO SERVE / CONNECTED IN FAITH

July 2019

A monthly Publication of
St. John Lutheran Church

Summer Worship Schedule

Wednesday Worship

6:00 PM

Sunday Worship

9:00 AM

Pastors

Pastor Mark Johnson

Pastor Sarah Timian

Office Staff

Jillmarie Stich

Audrey Zellman

Custodians

Curt & Cheryl Johnson

Organists

Eileen Hanlon

Diane West

Choir Director

Bri Bergstrom

Accompanist

Sheila Schmidt

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Belle Plaine, MN 56011

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Fun at Confirmation Camp



From Pastor Mark

(Reflections on Grace - based upon Matthew 20:1-16 and Galatians 3:23-29)

How do you react to this parable that Jesus tells? I think most folks would say, "It isn't fair." That's certainly what the people in the story were thinking. At the end of the day, the workers who were hired early got paid the same as the workers who were hired late. And so, quite naturally, they're upset. "It's not fair," they say. And they're right. It isn't fair.

And that's the point. Jesus begins by saying "Let me tell you a story about what the Kingdom of God is like." The Kingdom of God operates on a different economy than what we're used to. The economy in the world we live in is based on fairness. It may not always be fair - but that's supposed to be the idea - you get what you deserve - you earn your way up. There's no such thing as a free lunch. In this kind of economy, some have more than others - more things, more status, more power. There's a pecking order. There's people at the top and people at the bottom.

The misconception is that a lot of people apply this kind of thinking to their relationship with God. They see God as a Stern Accountant, keeping a close watch on their merits and demerits. They see themselves as having to climb their way up to God based on how good they are. And if they've been climbing that ladder for a long time, they see themselves as farther up on the pecking order than the folks who've just started. And that means they can look down their noses at the folks who haven't earned their way up to where they are.

And so Jesus tells this story. "Let me show you what the Kingdom of God looks like," Jesus says. And it shocks us. It upsets our sense of fairness. Because it isn't fair. Something else is going on here. The First and the Last are treated equally.

Jesus is showing us an economy that's not based on Merit. It's based on Grace. And we're not used to that. There is no ladder. There's no pecking order. It's not about us trying to climb up to some Far Distant Accountant God. It's about a Compassionate God coming down here - where we live - in the person of Jesus. It's a whole different, graceful, compassionate way of thinking.

Mark Twain joked one time, "It's a good thing Heaven is based on Grace and not Merit. Because if it was based on merit, you would stay out and the dog would go in."

Grace changes our relationship with God, from a Stern Accountant to a Loving Savior. And grace is meant to change our relationships with each other, as well.

In Jesus' day, people were divided up into different categories. And these categories gave people a sense of Identity and Rank. Jews saw their Ethnic and Religious Identity as superior to Non-Jews, or Gentiles. Men saw themselves as above Women. And Free People certainly saw themselves as higher up the ladder than Slaves.

Today's world, of course, is no different. We continue to live in a world that is divided up into different categories: Black and White, Rich and Poor, Gay and Straight, the Haves and Have Nots. These divisions assign who has power and privilege. These categories give people a sense of their Identity and where they fit into the scheme of things. They bestow upon people a sense of their Dignity and Value and Worth - Who Matters and Who Doesn't - Who's In and Who's Out.

This brings us to what Paul writes in Galatians. The Apostle Paul had started the first church in Galatia and based it upon God's loving grace for us in Christ. But since Paul had left, word had gotten back to him that some other folks had arrived and they were telling the Galatians that Paul had been wrong and that they had to earn their way up into God's favor. They had to climb the ladder.

This upset Paul. His Dander was up. And that's why Paul wrote his letter to the Galatian church that became part of our Bible. Notice where Paul goes here in verse 26: "For you are all children of God through faith in Christ." And then he adds, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ and are clothed in Christ."

Paul is going back to the very beginning here. Before we are divided up into Jew & Gentile, Slave and Free, Black and White - before all that - Who am I? I am a Child of God. That Identity underlies everything else. And how did I get to be a Child of God? Did I Earn It? No. Paul grounds his answer in the Grace of Baptism when he says, "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ."

How did any of us become a member of our church? Not because we earned our way in. Not because we're better than anyone else. We all got in the same way, by God's Loving and Compassionate Grace in claiming us as a Beloved Child through the Gift of our Baptism into Christ.

So if we are a Child of God by Grace, if that is our Basic, Foundational Identity, then notice what Paul says in the next verse: "Therefore," Paul writes, "There is neither Jew nor Gentile / Slave nor Free / Male nor Female." Take a second and think about that!

Gone is Ethnic Discrimination - There is Neither Jew nor Gentile.

From Pastor Sarah

LIVING THE MISSION

“St. John is called to worship, committed to serve, and connected in faith.”¹

What does that mean?

We live in a world of schedules, checklists, goals, and achievements. It's easy to get caught up in actions, but we need to take time to stop and just be, too. We need to remember what it is to wonder, to contemplate, to consider who God is and what that means. We need to take time to simply worship.

Called to Worship

This past week was the Week of the Holy Trinity in our Revised Common Lectionary. During worship, we took time to ponder the mystery of the triune God. We practiced pausing our lives right there in the middle of worship to simply stand in awe.

With our very busy lives, it's important to remember to do this. Worship helps us with that. It calls us to slow down our schedules and set aside our checklists for an hour or so, and remember who God is and how God relates to us. We get to do that— every week. We sing, we pray, we come together and remember who we are and what our God is calling us to do.

Committed to Serve

Of course, we need to act, too. Hopefully, answering the call to worship helps us remember our commitment to serve our neighbor and the world. When we gather to remind ourselves of who we are as children and followers of God and work through the message of the gospel, we can also realize what it is God is calling us to do and where we are to follow.

Our understanding of all that God has done for us compels us to ask what we can do for those around us. The rest of creation— the other things and people God also made— need our care, too. We follow Jesus beyond the church doors and worship hour to love and serve the world in whatever way we can.

Connected in Faith

As we live and ponder and serve, we need to remember we're not alone. It can be easy and even tempting to think that we're the only ones doing anything, but that simply isn't true. To be clear, that doesn't let us off the hook— we're still committed to doing the best we can with the gifts God gave us.

Remembering we're not alone in our faith and work is essential, though. Our connection allows us to be encouraged by those living and working with us in our faith communities and to avoid burnout by relying on each other for some of the strength we need. It also allows us to celebrate each other's faithful work and see the magnitude of what we can do together.

This summer, in the midst of all the schedules and checklists and everything else, I hope we take time to engage with the Mission Statement of St. John. Can we find ways to worship, serve, and connect with our faith community near and far? How might we live a life that reflects the mission we share?

¹St. John Lutheran Church Mission Statement as written in “Shaping Our Future: Our Ministry Plan 2014-2016.”

From Pastor Mark— cont.

Gone is Economic and Social Discrimination - There is Neither Slave nor Free.

Gone is Gender Discrimination - There is Neither Male nor Female.

This is Radical Stuff! This tears down the Walls that Divide us. This wipes out all those Categories that bestow power and privilege. We All Matter. We Are All Welcome. The Ground is Level at the Foot of the Cross. We all have Dignity and Value and Worth.

Well now, if we only lived in a world like this. As we know all too well, unfortunately, we don't. We live in a world of walls and divisions. We live in a world that tells us that you have to earn everything that you have and that you are - and that there is no such thing as a Free Lunch.

But let me just say, there is such a thing as a Free Lunch. As we gather in worship, we come as Brothers and Sisters in Christ to the Table of God's Grace. And it's not something that we earned. It's a Free Gift of God's Grace. We come to this Table as Children of God.

And how do we leave that Table? Do we go out in Fear or in Love? Do we go out in Joyless Obligation or in Heartfelt Gratitude? Do we go out to try to please a God who is out to get us - or to serve a God who loves us - and who has given himself up for us in Christ?

That Matters. How we see our Relationship / With God / With Others / With Ourselves - Matters. So go out knowing this. You are a Beloved Child of God. That's who you are. Don't ever forget that. And with a sense of Gratitude to God - let's treat others as the Precious Children that they are, too. Let's continue to work to make the world we live like that. Because that's the truth.

Families Moving Forward Host Week at OLP July 28 - August 4 Sign Up Below to Help!

Our Church, again, encourages its members to participate in the Families Moving Forward program when it hosts 4 homeless families at Our Lady of the Prairie during the week of **July 28th through August 4th**. You can volunteer by either making contact with the church office or signing up on line by using this browser: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/10C0444A5AD2FA4FC1-ourlady>
This effort would be a wonderful way for each of us to live the Gospel of Matthew.

Summer Mission Trip

St. John Youth and Adult Leaders will be traveling to Wind River, WY, July 14th— 19th for a mission trip.

Please keep them in your prayers as they travel to these sites.



The Newsletter is now on our Website

You can finally get St. John's newsletter on the website. When you go to the website click on Connect and look on the pull down for "Our Newsletter". Click on that and choose the newsletter you want to read and click on the link.

To be notified by email that a new newsletter is available, go to "Join our newsletter" and submit a request to be placed on the list. You will then be taken off the mailing list for newsletters.

Please do this even if you have sent a request before.



WE NEED YOU
to make our new family directory complete

SAVE THE DATES

Every 5 years St. John creates a picture directory and 2019 is the year for a new version.

The following dates have been set aside for pictures to be taken:

October 8th— 12th

November 5th— 9th

Watch for more information coming soon.



Stewardship Spotlight

Volunteer Focus On: Sarah Leonard



Sarah Leonard has attended St. John ever since she was a child growing up on a large dairy farm in Belle Plaine with her 2 younger sisters. Her family would alternate Sundays between St. John, where her father was a member, and Our Lady of the Prairie, where her mother went. Growing up on the farm taught Sarah how to work hard, and the importance of family time. Now grown with a family of her own, Sarah, a public health nurse, has been a formal member of St. John for 8 years, along with her husband Aaron, a local crop farmer. The two are kept on their toes by 4 young daughters: Lucy, Macy, Annie, and Elsie. The family recently moved out to Aaron's grandparents' farm, where the girls hope to be able to have chickens and a pig!

Currently, Sarah heads up the Children's Ministry Team at St. John. She joined the team 5 years ago, when she had 2 small daughters, and felt a pull to become more involved at church. One of her favorite things to do is to help put together special events that allow the congregation to watch the children's faith develop. She feels it is important for children to have a strong faith base, and to have somewhere that they feel comfortable asking questions, and developing a relationship with God. Sarah felt called to volunteer since St. John's youth membership is growing. "We have really great members that help out with the kids. Our volunteers give so much into Sunday School so the kids can develop relationships with adults that share their faith.", she said.

When not working, or helping out at St. John, you will find Sarah spending time with family, camping, reading, or running. Her goal is to run a half marathon! When asked about her goal, or vision, for St. John's youth program, she says she would love to see Sunday school evolve to include a wider variety of parental involvement with the program, so many different talents and viewpoints could be shared with the kids.

Thank you for sharing your time and talents with the youth, and all, at St. John, Sarah!

**Your Gifts Make a Difference
Thank You**

Worship Assistants Schedule

Audio Visual: Lou Longhenry Altar Guild: Lynne Jeurissen	July 7 Worship Assistants Coffee Hour: No Coffee Hour (4th of July weekend)
9:00	
Greeters: Zoe Otting Lay Readers: Courtney Eppen Communion Assistants: Warren Wolf & Jan Effinger Ushers: Myron Bratsch , Kirk Franck, Matt Kes, Jeff Eppen, Brian Siekmann, Brent Koepp , Mitchell Koepp, Kevin, Marcy & Garrett Boblitt, Jackson Stauffacher, Justin Stauffacher, Todd Kruggel	

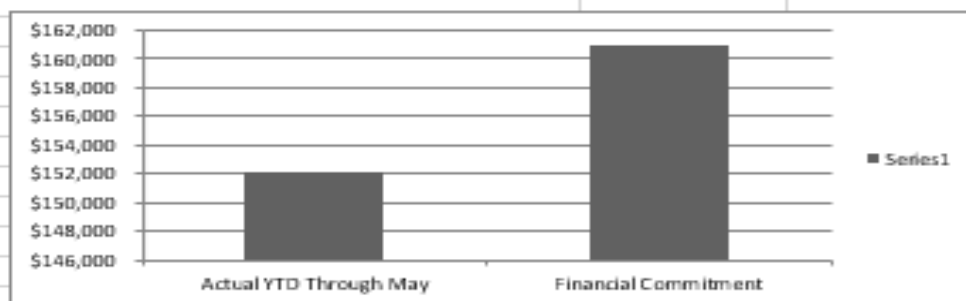
Audio Visual: Lou Longhenry Altar Guild: Lynne Jeurissen	July 14 Worship Assistants Coffee Hour: Angie Faucette, Connie Haas, Juls Robbins
9:00	
Greeters: Greg & Linda Schwichtenberg Lay Readers: Lee Sauter Communion Assistants: Dave Bungarden & Tim Moonen Ushers: Myron Bratsch , Kirk Franck, Matt Kes, Jeff Eppen, Brian Siekmann, Brent Koepp , Mitchell Koepp, Kevin, Marcy & Garrett Boblitt, Jackson Stauffacher, Justin Stauffacher, Todd Kruggel	

Audio Visual: Chris Zellman Altar Guild: Lynne Jeurissen	July 21 Worship Assistants Coffee Hour:
9:00	
Greeters: Jerry & Sue Meger Lay Readers: Steve Schroeder Communion Assistants: Larry & Marci Kiewel Ushers: Terry Siemon , James & John Karl, Dan & Wyatt Herrmann, Tim Bristlin, David Otto, Chris & Annette Moylan , Mike & Zach Olson, Jason & Trevor Gruhn, Steve Schroeder	

Audio Visual: Chris Zellman Altar Guild: Lynne Jeurissen	July 28 Worship Assistants Coffee Hour:
9:00	
Greeters: Kevin & Sandi Wolpern Family Lay Readers: Maddy Siekmann Communion Assistants: Lou & Peg Longhenry Ushers: Terry Siemon , James & John Karl, Dan & Wyatt Herrmann, Tim Bristlin, David Otto, Chris & Annette Moylan , Mike & Zach Olson, Jason & Trevor Gruhn, Steve Schroeder	

St. John Financial Results
Five Months Ending May 31, 2019 and May 31, 2018

<u>General Operating Fund</u>			Year Over Year
	May 31, 2019	May 31, 2018	Increase (Decrease)
Income	\$ 152,180	\$ 144,551	5%
Expenses:			
Personnel	(127,774)	(123,665)	
Office	(8,333)	(9,516)	
Property & Maintenance	(17,487)	(17,623)	
Ministry Teams	(9,842)	(15,311)	
Other	(2,361)	(1,953)	
Benevolence:			
Minneapolis Area Synod	(5,000)	(5,000)	
Camp Onomia	(1,250)	(1,250)	
Lutheran Social Services	(500)	(500)	
Net Receipts / (Expenditures)	\$ (20,367)	\$ (30,267)	
Cash Balance at January 1 (excl. all loans)	\$ (64,346)	\$ (35,163)	
Net Income / (Expenditures)	(20,367)	(30,267)	
Misc. cash not affecting income	(928)	(203)	
Loan from Building Fund (from 2018 & 2019)	37,500	15,000	
Loan from St. John Foundation (from 2014-2016)	53,397	52,866	
Cash Balance at May 31	\$ 5,256	\$ 2,233	
<u>Building Fund</u>			
Receipts	\$ 55,131	\$ 59,421	-7%
Capital Appeal Expenses	-	(2,205)	
Miscellaneous Expenses	(124)	(10)	
Principal	(45,370)	(43,341)	
Interest	(7,430)	(9,459)	
Loaned to General Fund	(2,500)	(15,000)	
Net Receipts / (Disbursements)	\$ (293)	\$ (10,594)	
Loan Balance at January 1	\$ 435,544	\$ 551,424	
Principal Payments	(45,370)	(43,341)	
Loan Balance at May 31	\$ 390,174	\$ 508,083	
Actual Income Compared to 2019 Financial Commitment:			
Actual YTD Through May	\$ 152,180		
Financial Commitment	\$ 160,955		



Summer Offerings

Thank you for remembering your regular support to both our general operating and our building funds this Summer, even when you are away. Your regular support is needed and appreciated, particularly with our general operating fund, over these months. Have a great Summer!

St. John Lutheran Church
148 S. Chestnut St.
Belle Plaine 56011

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Change Service Requested



Saturday, August 3

The Lutheran Home Belle Plaine Campus is sponsoring a walk to raise awareness about dementia and those it effects. Walk in memory or honor of a loved on with memory loss. All proceeds will support memory care funding on our campus.

Register at ttha.org

Registration forms are also available at The Lutheran Home: Belle Plaine, Kingsway Retirement Living and KingsPath Senior Living in Belle Plaine.

<p>Location: Walk starts and ends at The Lutheran Home: Belle Plaine (611 West Main Street) Length: 2 miles</p> <p><i>Please contact Emily Bullert at ejbullert@ttha.org for more information!</i></p>	<p>Registration costs are \$20 for adults and \$7 for children, age 12 and younger. Includes T-shirt and pinwheel. Register by July 12.</p>
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<p>Event details: 8 a.m.—Registration 9 a.m.—Ceremony 9:10 a.m.— Walk begins 10—11 a.m. Post-walk activities include face painting, balloon twisting & live music by the Mankato Vine Garage Band</p>	<p>Packet Pickup—Friday, August 2 Time: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Location: KingsPath Senior Living, 125 Commerce Drive. Onsite same day packet pick up is available. Onsite same-day registration is available for \$25 for adults and \$12 for children. T-shirt size not guaranteed for same day registration.</p>
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BELLE PLAINE CAMPUS
A MINISTRY OF THE LUTHERAN HOME ASSOCIATION



Weekly Events

Every Monday— Men's Bible Study 8:00 am at Kingsway
Every Wednesday— Worship 6:00 pm
Gathering Area
Every Sunday-
Worship 9:00 am

Monthly Events

First Monday— Quilting at 1:00 pm
First Tuesday-
10:00 Cardinal Ridge Service
11:00 Lutheran Home Service
1:00 Kingsway Service
Second Tuesday— Women's Bible Study 9:30 am
Kitchen Area