

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH MESSENGER

CALLED TO WORSHIP / COMMITTED TO SERVE / CONNECTED IN FAITH

July 2020

A monthly Publication of
St. John Lutheran Church

Worship Schedule

In building worship services have been postponed till further notice. Watch our services on Facebook and for other options to come.

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

148 S. Chestnut St.
Belle Plaine, MN 56011

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Drive In Service Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. Sunday Service at 9:00 a.m. And Beyond...

Right now, we are holding a live drive-in service each Wednesday evening at the Stier bus parking lot at 6:30 p.m. Please use the Meridian street entrance and tune your FM radio dial to 99.9 to hear the service. You'll also be able to hear it pretty well through our loudspeakers. We feature all the parts of the service, music from Sheila and Rae, and even a way that we can all take Communion in our cars. C'mon out and join us!

We have also established a Re-Opening Team that is working on providing a Sunday morning worship service at 9:00 a.m. under current limitations and guidelines for gatherings. Of course, stay home if you or anyone in your household is sick or has symptoms. Persons at higher risk are encouraged to stay home. Use your judgment and common sense to keep yourself and others safe.

We are asking everyone to wear a mask. Please bring one or we will provide you with one. In order to maintain appropriate distance, we will have ushers meet you and seat you in the Sanctuary. We will use the Gathering Area as an overflow. Ushers will also dismiss you after the service. There will be no coffee fellowship at this time.

We are also adapting some things in the service to help us stay safe around such things as having an Offering, taking Communion, group singing, etc.

Please keep an eye out for updates and guidelines on Re-opening on our Website and Facebook page.

Looking ahead, we will also be making plans and preparations for the Fall. A number of schools around us are prepping for three scenarios: Everyone back in school, a hybrid of some students in school and some online, or everyone online. Those plans will become clearer as the Summer goes on. As Sunday School, Connect and Confirmation roll around again, we will also have to be planning to meet a fluid and changing situation.

From Pastor Mark

I believe it was the legendary sports broadcaster Vin Sculley who was giving an update on one of his team's pitchers who was coming back from an injury. The report listed that he was "day to day," to which Vin remarked, "Aren't we all?" Truth be told, yes, we are all listed as "day to day." The Apostle James writes in his letter, "Now listen, you who say, 'Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.' Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, 'If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that.'"

Well that's humbling now, isn't it? It's easy to take our life for granted. It's easy to see our life as our own project or possession. But, in fact, it isn't. Life is a gift. Each day of life is a gift, for however long it lasts. And who knows who long that will be? The simple fact is, we are all "day to day."

That said, we tend to be creatures of routine. The routine predictability of our days and weeks brings with it a sense of comfort and security. We feel like we have a handle on things and we know what to expect. Until we don't. Until something unexpected comes along and reminds us of how fragile this gift of life really is. Someone we love dies. We lose a job that we've liked and depended upon. A relationship that has been very important to us breaks up. The doctor calls with some troubling news. And suddenly, the safe and predictable routine of our days is upended. The old familiar landscape is altered. We are knocked off balance and life feels strange and out of joint.

Of course, this happens to each of us on an individual basis. Events come along that shake us up. And now, we are all going through a collective sense of being shaken up. We are feeling our way along through a time where the familiar and comforting landmarks are tilted over one side. We feel disoriented. Who would have guessed, at the beginning of this year, that we would be experiencing a global pandemic that would change the way we live and work and play and stay in contact? And, as a result, that the lives and livelihoods of millions of people would be impacted in such sudden and dramatic ways. And, while all of this is happening, that we would find ourselves in the midst of protests and movements seeking to look at the way that we see and care for and relate to each other so that everyone might have the opportunity to live with fairness and justice and equality.

As Bob Dylan put it, "The times, they are a-changin'." And we can view it in a couple of ways. We can be overwhelmed by the situation, focus on everything that is lost or uncertain, and become fearful and anxious. And that is a normal reaction. When life knocks the legs out from under us we automatically want to recover what has been lost. We want to feel comforted and assured that we will be alright. However, we don't want to become trapped in our fearful anxieties either. While they are a natural and normal response to our changed reality, we need to also look for ways to grow beyond our fears and uncertainties.

Life is a teacher. We may not always like what life is teaching us, but a troubling situation also brings with it an opportunity to learn and change and adapt, to grow in courage and patience, to stretch out with faith and hope and trust, to break open new wellsprings within us of love and compassion and understanding.

St. Paul writes in the fifth chapter of Romans, "We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance, and perseverance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."

We are going through a time of trial and uncertainty. We can fix our focus on what's wrong and be dragged down by it. And there certainly are some people who will do just that. They will become bitter and cynical. They will look to place blame. They will create enemies. They will become closed in upon themselves and their world will become smaller.

On the other hand, we can also see this present challenge as an opportunity to grow and change, to open our minds and hearts up to something new and different. We can ask different questions. What is the present moment trying to teach us? How will we adapt and change? How can this challenge also be an opportunity to enlarge our heart, to see beyond our own little world, to reach out and grow in compassion and understanding and grace?

The old saying is true, "This, too, shall pass." We will come through this. But this experience will change us, too. Will we be more opened up or closed down? Will we be more fearful or more trusting? Will we be more generous or more stingy? Individuals will respond differently. And groups within our society will, as well. The question is, are we orienting our life in ways that will bring more life to others, or in ways that seek only to protect and secure ourselves? That's the challenge that such times bring.

Of course, if you read the Bible story, it helps to remember that God's people have gone through some tremendous times of challenge. The nation of Israel, in the Old Testament, was destroyed by the mighty Babylonian empire. The capital city of Jerusalem and the Temple itself was utterly laid waste. Many, many people were killed and most of those who survived were forcefully taken to live as exiles in the faraway land of Babylon.

How did the people react? Naturally, they lamented their loss. Their whole world had been shattered to pieces. They were individually and collectively traumatized. They wondered how this could have happened and what the future would portend.

From Pastor Sarah

THE WAITING SEASON

Well, the planting has been done, and the growing has begun. Now, it's time for the next part of this gardening process—waiting.

The waiting season might be one of the most difficult seasons to face. There doesn't seem to be much progress as the days pass. Time just goes by as the plants gain a few inches or a new leaf here and there. It's tedious, but necessary.

I can't help but see the parallels between the plants on my balcony and where we are as a society right now. We seem to be in a waiting season—waiting to see progress on racial and social justice as well as the COVID-19 pandemic and postponed events. We've planted the seeds and started the growth, but we're not to the resolution yet.

We're waiting. As with all waiting seasons, though, we have to be careful not to fall into the temptation of complacency. Waiting seasons are not passive; they're active. Just like I can't simply leave my plants out on the balcony and hope that in another month or two they'll be flourishing—they're going to need water, at the very least—we also can't just identify issues like coronavirus or racism and hope they will resolve themselves. It's going to take attention and effort on our part to shift how we interact with the world and change the system for the better.

Waiting seasons are active. They take time, but that time needs to be used well to tend to the changes we hope to see happen. We may need to do some research or consult some experts, and then make decisions and take action based on what we learn. We may need to do some work on ourselves so that we can open up enough to be able to hear the voices we need to learn from.

Jesus often used plants and crops in metaphors describing the Kingdom of Heaven to the people he encountered. Mustard seeds, types of soil, vineyards, and harvests all work together to create a layered understanding of what that growth looks like and how we arrive at this new world. With these images, we begin to understand not only what we're hoping for, but also how we might become active participants in living into it.

It's easy to run out of energy in a waiting season. It's not the most exciting thing to make sure to water the plants or weed the flowerbeds. Other things can distract us from the task at hand. Sometimes we have to intentionally take time to remember that original inspiration—why we planted the seeds and wanted this growth in the first place. Sometimes we have to imagine the goal—what could be ahead at the harvest.

May we keep our goals and hopes in mind as we live through our waiting season, and may our actions in this season contribute to the yield of the harvest.

Have you changed your address, phone number or email? We would like to keep our database up to date so we can keep in contact with you. Please let us know if any of your contact information has changed by calling the church office at 873-6492 or send to our email office@stjohnbelleplaine.org.

Thanks

Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes June 8, 2020

President Matt Stier called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Present:

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

Opening Devotions: Pastor Sarah shared a devotional prayer

Approval of Minutes: Members of Council reviewed the minutes from the May 21, 2020 Council Meeting. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes.

Pastor Mark's Report:

Pastor Mark shared his letter to the congregation regarding recorded services, local cable access, drive in worship service, Baptisms/weddings/funerals, weekly scriptures, newsletters, prayer chains, personal calls, continuing support of the church with offerings, and items still in the works. The congregation received the letter via mail.

Pastor Sarah's Report:

Online Ministry—We have continued to practice distance church, and have been maintaining an online presence to remain connected to and supportive of our faith community. Prayers, check-ins, worship videos and musical preludes for worship have all been part of the regular posting schedule. Additional items, such as announcements, church pictures, and updates, have been added as they arise. We hope to continue this even as we begin Drive-in Worship.

Confirmation Camp—Confirmation Camp Registrations have been transferred to next year. We will be working with Camp Onomia to find a second week for students to attend camp as a class. An email with this information has been sent to all families with a student registered for Confirmation Camp.

Additional Ministries - In accordance with the Church Council's decision last month, St. John has begun to reach out to families regarding limited-attendance events that can adhere to current guidelines and recommendations, such as baptisms, weddings, and funerals. The Small Group Committee and church staff have also been discussing additional ways to connect with the St. John community beyond the online ministry. The Drive-in Worship service is set to begin on June 17. A letter was sent out to St. John members highlighting some of these items.

Ongoing Items—Preparation continues for sermons and worship leadership, newsletter articles, and other communications. Meetings with ministry teams and staff have resumed either on a virtual platform (e.g. Zoom) or in a socially distanced capacity.

Staff Report: Custodial: No new report - parts are set to come in to fix the three doors.

Treasurer: Rae presented the May financial reports for the General fund and Building fund as well as the May PPP Loan proceeds and use.

Transfers:

No Transfers in or out this month.

Ongoing Business

Rental Property

There is a renter who will be moving on on July 15th. She has signed a year lease and has given first months rent and damage deposit.

There is still a need for a property manager. This person would be who the renter would call to discuss needed repairs. They then would either fix the repair (some general repair and mechanical knowledge necessary) or make a call to the selected companies/contractors that the church has used to get the repair done. Availability on nights and weekends would be necessary. The renter will call the church office during business hours otherwise (Monday-Friday 8-5) if things come up. The church council is looking for a member to take on this responsibility. If you have a desire, or know someone, please let a council member know. The position will be paid \$20/hr with at least an hour minimum.

Strategic Planning Process

The council discussed going back to plans from "pre-Covid" to bring in some consultants to get more information on how to proceed with future planning of St. John's, 10, 20, 30 years from now. It is the understanding of the council that things will not be started until the pandemic is under control. Getting ideas for options is what the focus will be right now.

New Business

A. Establishing a Reopening Committee

The council would like to develop a committee to help with planning for re-opening the church to the suggested capacity. Both pastors and Curt and Cheryl Johnson will be leads on this committee. Post-cards will be sent to the congregation to look for volunteers to help in the areas of cleaning, guidelines for gathering, seating/ushering, determining capacity, etc. Please contact Pastor Mark or Pastor Sarah if you would be willing to help on this committee.

Ministry Team Updates

Stewardship Committee - plan to meet soon

Buildings and Grounds Committee - have been meeting to discuss rental property

Personnel Committee - will be meeting soon

Children's Ministry Committee - have not met

Small Group/Faith Formation Committee - have met to discuss having confirmation students send letters to the elderly, calling homebound members who are 76+ or older to check in, sending a newsletter, doing a Zoom bible study, and possibly working on getting a live broadcast of the church services to members at Kingsway.

Worship and Music Committee - met to discuss outdoor drive-up service

Technology and Communications Committee - no meeting held

Festivals Committee - no meeting held

Motion was made, seconded and carried to adjourn at 7:51pm. Meeting was adjourned followed by the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Angie Kahle, Secretary

Pastor Mark Cont...

Still, even through such a fierce cauldron of adversity, God had not forgotten about them. They survived, chastened and changed. Over and over again, the people of God have faced challenges. And over and over again, God has been with them. And that hasn't changed. Even when we can't see the way ahead, we can trust that God is with us and holding onto us. And we can trust that God will bring us through whatever the trial is, even the ultimate catastrophe of death itself. God is bigger. God's love and compassion is stronger. God has the last word. And that word is a word of life and hope and promise.

Life is a gift. We are all "day to day." God is good. So, let's continue this journey together. Let's seek to learn and grow through what life brings to us. And let's keep looking up, knowing that God is holding us in large arms of compassion and grace.

The Lord be with you!

July 2020



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Abby Wolpert Marly's Koepp Luke Siemon	5 Jim Bergs Martha Dressel Lori Thaves Corey Johnson Paul Nasby	6 Erin Carlson Renee Eyrich Hannah Heckers Emma Luskey	7 Vayda Borresen Josiah Brueske Rhonda Doeden Nova Howk	8 Bev Delgehausen Suzanne Hillstrom Jaydon Koonst Geraldine Tesch	9 Allison Bristlin Sloane Schaffler Niklas Tharaldson	10 Emily Wemmerskirschen Susana Rosario
Jason Einertson Patrick Lawler Linea Olson Senjah Peterson	12 Emily Fogarty Braylon Graff Jackson Graff Brynlee Koch Brianna Swenson	13 Emma Davis Summer Stier-Davis	14 Meredith Carstens Carter Doebselung Jacob Meier Julie Oldenburg	15 Cullen Davidson Anne Herrmann Sydney Weiland Barbara Koepp	16 Sara Bungarden Jodi Fahey Megan Fahey Sue Wilson Jennifer Nagorski	17 Greyson Hardel Judy Wolf Mary Koepp Caleb Smith Tonya Smith
Stephanie Paulson Jackson Schroeder Olivia Smith	19 Olivia Paulson	20 Melissa Armstrong Jacob Fogarty Grayson Gynild Madeline Gynild Remi Meyer Sydney Meyer Tim Stier	21 Douglas Eckblad Melanie Eggers	22 Kevin Boblitt Roger Delgehausen Janessa Meuleners Ashley Pankonin	23 Kayla Buszmann Ryan Cecka	24 Matt Fogarty Nicolas Johnson Ashton Pankonin Terry Stier
Thomas Carstens Addison Chard Nicole Koepp Daniel Rosario Merlin Stier	26 Alama Anderson Holly Potter	27 Bennet Aust Scott Hornaman Jacob Koenig Benjamin Koepp Betty Kosse	28 Gerald Bratsch Jessy Dols Noah Hanson Lisa Holbrook	29 Greg Meyer Hunter Meyer	30 Marlene Anderley Cade Eggers Isaac Hanson Gene Stier	31

There are now two new ways to give to St. John

You can now give to St. John through a text or through an App. To learn how to use the App or text go to our website, www.stjohnbelleplaine.org, click on "Serve" and then "Giving" and click on the instructions for the App or Text.

Financial Corner

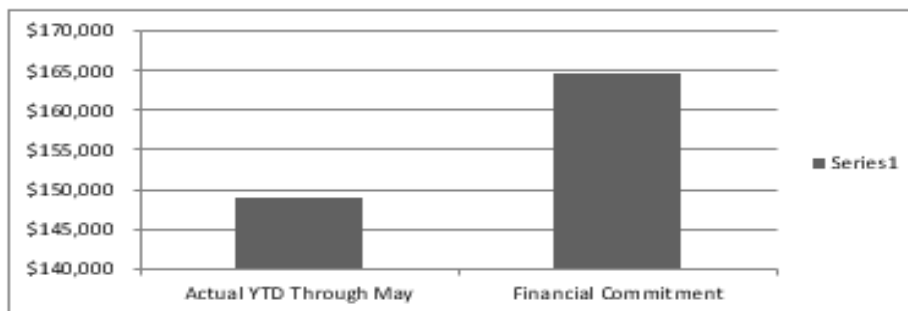
**St. John Financial Results
Five Months Ending May 31, 2020 and May 31, 2019**

<u>General Operating Fund</u>			<u>Year Over Year</u>
	<u>May 31, 2020</u>	<u>May 31, 2019</u>	<u>Increase (Decrease)</u>
Income	\$ 148,982	\$ 152,180	-2%
Expenses:			
Personnel	(128,622)	(127,774)	
Office	(9,092)	(8,333)	
Property & Maintenance	(17,898)	(17,487)	
Ministry Teams	(14,236)	(9,842)	
Other	(1,591)	(2,361)	
Benevolence:			
Minneapolis Area Synod	(5,000)	(5,000)	
Camp Onomia	(1,000)	(1,250)	
World Hunger (2019)	(250)	-	
Lutheran Social Services	(500)	(500)	
Net Receipts / (Expenditures)	<u>\$ (29,207)</u>	<u>\$ (20,367)</u>	
Cash Balance at January 1 (excl. all loans)	\$ (84,836)	\$ (64,346)	
Net Income / (Expenditures)	(29,207)	(20,367)	
Misc. cash not affecting income	(236)	(928)	
Paycheck Protection Loan (2020)	57,600	-	
Loan from Building Fund (from 2018 - 2020)	61,500	37,500	
Loan from St. John Foundation (from 2014-2016)	53,933	53,397	
Cash Balance at May 31	<u>\$ 58,753</u>	<u>\$ 5,256</u>	

<u>Building Fund</u>			
Receipts	\$ 42,202	\$ 55,131	-23%
Miscellaneous Expenses	-	(124)	
Principal	(47,874)	(45,370)	
Interest	(4,926)	(7,430)	
Loaned to General Fund	(7,000)	(2,500)	
Net Receipts / (Disbursements)	<u>\$ (17,598)</u>	<u>\$ (293)</u>	
Loan Balance at January 1	\$ 325,224	\$ 435,544	
Principal Payments	(47,874)	(45,370)	
Loan Balance at May 31	<u>\$ 277,350</u>	<u>\$ 390,174</u>	

Actual Income Compared to 2020 Financial Commitment:

Actual YTD Through May	\$ 148,982
Financial Commitment	\$ 164,731



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

Do you have internet but don't have Facebook?
You can still see everything we post on our website!
Just look in the lower right corner under "Church Updates"

www.stjohnbelleplaine.org



Facebook posts and videos are here!