

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH MESSENGER

CALLED TO WORSHIP / COMMITTED TO SERVE / CONNECTED IN FAITH

March 2021

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.

Pastor

Pastor Mark Johnson

Office Staff

Audrey Zellman

Treasurer

Rae Fimon

Custodians

Curt & Cheryl Johnson

Organist

Eileen Hanlon

Choir Director

Bri Bergstrom

Accompanist

Sheila Schmidt

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Belle Plaine, MN 56011

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Lenten Services

February 24 thru March 24

6:00 pm

See more information inside



Holy Week
Maundy Thursday Service
With Communion

April 1st

6:00 pm

Holy Week
Good Friday Service

April 2nd

6:00 pm



Easter Morning Service
April 4th
Details to be announced Later

Worshippers may attend in-person, masked and distanced, with limited attendance available. The services will also be live streamed on Facebook. In addition, they will be recorded and archived for people to view at a later time.

From Pastor Mark

The theme for our Midweek Lenten services this year is “Basic Lutheran Beliefs.” Our themes for each week include: Luther and the Reformation / The Word / Baptism / Communion / Creed. These weeks will provide a good opportunity to remember and review together some of the main things that we, as Lutherans, believe.

Of course, basic Lutheran beliefs can be traced to Martin Luther. He was born in Eisleben, Germany in 1483, the son of a prosperous town tradesman who, in 1501, enrolled Luther in the school in Erfurt to study law. However, in 1505 Luther was caught out in the countryside during a violent thunderstorm. Lightning was seen as a sign of God’s judgment and Luther, fearing for his life, promised that if he survived he would become a monk. He was good to his word and joined the Augustinian monastery in Erfurt, infuriating his father who had wanted him to become a lawyer.

The medieval world of Luther’s day was poor and illiterate and life was hard. People struggled to survive and many died young. Life was uncertain and the local church offered hope for a better life after death to all those who were faithful and loyal while, at the same time, promising eternal torment for those who disobeyed. Luther knew he was a sinner and was terrified of God’s judgment. The medieval church taught that loyal believers would go to heaven if their merits outweighed their sins. Since this was virtually impossible, believers would spend time in a place called Purgatory, after death, where they would suffer while their sins were being purged. This was a frightful prospect and Luther took it very seriously. He was obsessed with feelings of unworthiness. He spent hours in the Confessional booth going over and over his sins. He was frightened and tormented in his soul so much so that he even confessed to hating God, which itself was a serious sin. He felt trapped with no way out.

In 1510, in an effort to relieve his inner turmoil, Luther’s superiors sent him to Rome, the seat of the Roman Catholic church. Luther walked 700 miles and entered Rome as a wide-eyed pilgrim. He was expecting to see piety and perfection but, instead, was struck by the stark contrast of a very wealthy and privileged church when compared with the Bible’s injunctions to care for the sick and the poor. Over the centuries the Church had become corrupt, materialistic, worldly, engaged in political intrigue and power. In a poor, illiterate world the Church would interpret and control what people thought and suppress progressive and scientific thinkers.

Instead of being impressed with spiritual piety, Luther began to be disillusioned. He was troubled by the widespread practice of the veneration of holy relics which were, purportedly, pieces of the bodies of saints and bits of holy objects. Venerating these relics was considered a way to gain merit and reduce your time in purgatory. It was also a big moneymaker for the church who charged admission to view the relics. Luther began to question if the Church was taking advantage of the simple believer’s faith. He climbed a holy staircase in Rome on his knees, each step promising to reduce time in purgatory. When he reached the top he wondered if any of this was true. He hiked back to Germany with a lot to think about.

Germany was divided up into many different regions in Luther’s day, each with its own ruler. Frederick the Wise ruled over the region where the University of Wittenberg was located and he invited Luther to join the faculty as a Professor of Theology. Luther taught and preached and began to question some of the corruption and practices that the church was espousing. Since there was no separation of Church and State in these days, this was dangerous. Attacking the Church was seen as a treasonous attack on the State and subject to punishment and death. And there were many who had suffered those consequences.

Luther was still struggling with his feelings of unworthiness. He was brilliant and had studied the Bible in its original languages of Greek and Hebrew. The more he read, the more questions he had. And then, one evening as Luther meditated on Romans 1:17, the verse where St. Paul writes, “the righteous shall live by faith,” he said it was as if the doors of heaven were suddenly thrown open to him. This verse unlocked the key for Luther that salvation was not to be found in one’s own merit and good works but, rather, by faith in God’s good work of grace for us through Christ. Luther realized that the directions were reversed. Instead of us trying to climb up to God on a ladder of our good works, God had come down here in the person of Jesus who lived, died and rose again for us to provide us with forgiveness, reconciliation and new life. The more he read now in the Bible, the more he saw the truth of this. And it was a deep and central truth that would change his life.

Around this time, the Church in Rome was building the Basilica of St. Peter’s. It was huge, lavish and very expensive and the Church was financing it with the sale of indulgences. Indulgences were signed letters from the Pope that could be purchased and that promised the complete forgiveness of sins and release from purgatory, not only for the buyer but also transferable to a dead relative, as well. Johan Tetzel came through Luther’s town in Germany announcing that, “When the coin in the coffer rings, the soul from purgatory springs!” Luther, remembering the corruption he had seen in Rome, was outraged. The Bible said nothing about indulgences or purgatory.

On October 31, 1517, Luther nailed 95 theses, or points of dispute he was having with the Church’s teachings, to the church door in Wittenberg, which was a kind of public bulletin board. The theses were written in Latin and were only intended for debate among the theological faculty at Wittenburg’s University. However, 84 years earlier Gutenberg had invented the printing press which was the internet of its day. Luther’s theses were taken down, translated into German, copied and distributed everywhere. Within ten days they had reached Spain which, in those days, was

light speed. They caused a sensation. People began to have questions. Sales of indulgences dropped dramatically. Luther followed up by publishing pamphlets, illustrated by Lucas Cranach, that were widely popular.

The Church in Rome took notice and threatened Luther with excommunication. When challenged, Luther responded with more pamphlets. The Church in Rome burned Luther's writings. Luther answered by burning the papal bull of his excommunication.

In 1521 Luther was summoned before the most powerful person in Europe, Charles the Fifth, a staunch Catholic and ally of the Pope, to a meeting, or "Diet," in the city of Worms. However, Charles was also concerned about defending his empire against Turkish attack and needed German support. He would have to deal with Luther carefully. Luther was called to recant his writings. He responded by saying that if it could be shown to him by Scripture and clear reason that he was in error, he would gladly take back anything he had written. But if this could not be shown, he took a bold stand, declaring before the Emperor, "Here I stand. I can do no other. God help me!" To speak truth that boldly to power in Luther's day took extreme courage.

Luther was declared an outlaw. He was now outside the protection of the law. Leaving the Diet of Worms, he was kidnapped. It was widely assumed his enemies had killed him. However, Frederick the Wise did not want to see his bright and popular theologian killed so he had arranged to have Luther seized and taken into secret protection at the castle fortress of Wartburg where Luther lived in hiding for a year as a knight under the assumed name of George. With a lot of time on his hands, and realizing the importance of God's Word in the Bible, Luther translated the Bible into German, setting the standard for the language still in use today.

Luther returned from exile to a time of chaos and conflict. The movement he had unwittingly started was growing beyond his control. Germany's peasants revolted violently against their feudal Lords and were put down brutally. Churches were attacked and statues and paintings were destroyed. Monks and nuns left monasteries and priests began to marry. It was a time of great turmoil and upheaval. The movement that had arisen as a protest against the Church in Rome became known as the protesting, or "protestant" movement and spread to Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden, England, Scotland, etc. setting the stage for political and religious wars that would last for one hundred years.

Luther married a former nun, Katie Von Bora, in 1525 and had six children, as well as adopting four orphans. The married Luther affirmed the goodness of human life. As a good German, he said that two of his favorite things were beer and theology. His dining room table became famous for hosting many theology students for dinner and conversations.

In 1530, Charles the Fifth, called a Diet in the city of Augsburg for the purpose of discussing defense against the threat of Turkish invasion. Many German rulers had adopted Luther's teachings and Charles summoned a Lutheran delegation to discuss unresolved religious issues and to seek compromise and unity, if possible. It was too dangerous for Luther to attend personally so he sent his trusted right hand man, the brilliant theologian Melancthon, as the head of the delegation. Melancthon, in conjunction with Luther, had written a treatise including 28 articles of Lutheran belief, ranging through such items as: God, original sin, the Son of God, Justification by Faith, the Church, the Sacraments, Free will, etc. This document took the name of "The Augsburg Confession" and became a defining document of Lutheran belief and doctrine that Lutheran churches still subscribe to to this day.

Luther lived in a fertile and complicated time. The old Medieval world was giving way to the Renaissance. Art and culture began to flourish with Raphael and Michelangelo. Science was taking fledgling root with Leonardo and Copernicus. Columbus had stumbled upon a new discovery that had been unknown in Europe. The world was beginning to expand. And Luther was very much a part of this complicated and turbulent time.

Luther could be warm and loving with his family and friends and his critics could find him devastatingly ruthless and crude in his attacks. Upset that the Jews were not converting to Christ, he wrote against them with such venom that Hitler and the Third Reich would adopt some of his writings as justification for their wickedness. He took the side of the Feudal Lords in the Peasant's revolt and urged the revolution to be put down with any means, including violence. He was a complicated man and far from perfect. He was also a pivotal man at a pivotal time in history.

Three great catchphrases that grew out of the Reformation were: The Word Alone as the Source and Norm of our Christian Faith - Salvation by Grace Alone, through Faith Alone - and The Priesthood of All Believers. These would form the pillars informing and supporting the burgeoning and evolving protestant movement.

Luther died in 1546 and is buried in the church he had so often preached in in Wittenburg. His grave is there today and people still bring flowers.

Born into a static Medieval world, Luther left a world in change. And he had a large and significant role in that change. He was born into a world ruled by the unchallenged authority of Kings and Popes against which he took a stand. Summoning great courage he said that the individual and the individual's conscience mattered. He championed literacy and learning so that people could read the Bible. Out of these seeds that Luther planted has grown the democracy and freedoms that we enjoy today. The world we live in was put into motion by Luther and the change makers of his time. As such, Luther was one of the most significant giants of the last millennium, not only in bringing about religious reformation but also in providing the ground that would give root to the rights and privileges that we have inherited today.

The ferment and change of those challenging times was not always pretty but it was necessary. The Roman Catholic church responded with a Counter Reformation in the mid sixteenth century, seeking to curb abuses and defend against perceived heresy. The repercussions have lasted a long time. I am old enough to remember a time when Catholics and Lutherans didn't get along. Fortunately, in the early 60's the Catholic Church held the Second Vatican Council ushering in significant liturgical and ecumenical reforms. The monks from St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, by St. Cloud, had a significant role at the Council. It so happens that the first free standing altar in the Western world is in the Sanctuary at St. John's. How about that! And the ecumenical movement launched by the Council has repaired the relationship between Catholics and Lutherans and brought us together so we recognize that we are on the same team, that we are different expressions of the same faith. We baptize our children, not as Lutheran or Catholic, but in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. I am glad we are living into these times of ecumenical reconciliation and very much appreciate our dear brothers and sisters in the faith that we hold in common together.

So when we talk about "Basic Lutheran Beliefs" this Lenten season, it's good to think back upon the time and place and person through whom these beliefs came into being and evolved. Please join us for our time together. I look forward to it!

Midweek Lenten Services February 24 – March 24

Our Midweek Services will continue each Wednesday at 6:00 p.m. during the Lenten Season. Due to pandemic restrictions, we will not be having our regular Soup & Sandwich Suppers.

The services will feature cantors and members of the choir sharing the beautiful, familiar Holden Evening prayer service. The message series for this year will feature a weekly reflection on "Basic Lutheran Beliefs."

Worshippers may attend in-person, masked and distanced as we are doing on Sundays. The services will also be live streamed on Facebook. In addition, they will be recorded and archived for people to view at a later time.

Connect and Confirmation students will be filling out Lenten Service sheets each week and turning them in to Pastor Mark. Lesson sheets are found in our Google Doc file. Students should also continue to turn in their regular Sunday morning worship sheets, as well.

Note: Saturday Evening Services are on Hiatus during Lent

Our Saturday evening services will be on break during the Lenten season resuming again on April 10. Please join us for our Midweek services during the Lenten Season.

Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes of February 18, 2021

President Albert Koeppe called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

Present:

X	Pastor Mark	X	Matt Stier	X	Albert Koeppe	X	Wendy Theis
	Angie Kahle	x	Rae Fimon	X	Jen Nagorski	X	Sue Koenig
X	Chris Zellman	X	Steve Kelm	X	Ben Aust	X	Chris Schultz
X	Curt Johnson	X	Anne Herrmann	X			

Opening Devotions: Pastor Mark shared opening devotions.

Introductions and Welcome

Contact Information Sheet - reviewed; phone number for Chris Schultz was updated.

Council Job Description - reviewed; taking note of item number five and six under Council Covenant to notify council president of items for inclusion in the agenda and keeping business to stated agenda items.

Approval of Minutes: Approval of January 14th minutes tabled.

Pastor Mark's Report:

The online version of "Sunday morning Live" is now happening with the live-streaming of our worship service on Facebook at 9:00 a.m. Services are also recorded and archived for future reference, as well. We should also be checking into a You Tube option for those who are not very involved with Facebook.

Midweek Lenten Services began with Ash Wednesday on February 17 and will continue on Wednesday evenings throughout the season at 6:00 p.m. Services are available in-person, masked and distanced, as well as live-streamed and recorded and archived. For the five weeks following Ash Wednesday, we will be featuring the Holden Evening Prayer Service, facilitated by members of our choir. This year, the theme for these weeks will be "Basic Lutheran Beliefs." Each week will be centered on a different topic: Luther and the Reformation, the Word, Baptism, Communion and the Creed. Connect and Confirmation Students will be filling out and returning worksheets each week, along with an adult mentor. Maundy Thursday and Good Friday are April 1 and 2. Easter is April 4. The Worship Team will be in conversation about how best to facilitate that this year.

Letters have gone out to all 7th and 8th grade Confirmation students and families regarding Confirmation Camp. After discussion with all of our small group leaders, and in consultation with the Camp Onomia Director, Jim Schmidt, it was determined that we would have our 7th graders register and pay their portion of camp fees (\$125) online for the regular Confirmation Camp week of June 13-18. The church subsidizes the rest of the fee for each camper (\$360, with early bird discount). Since the 8th graders paid but there was no camp last Summer due to Covid the Council, at its May meeting, decided to send them this year. In discussion with 8th grade leaders it was determined that there was not one week that would work for everyone so we decided to offer an option of three different weeks (July 11-16; 18-23; 25-30). Their fees are paid and they will register online. Of course, all this depends upon what the circumstances are like as we approach the Summer.

The Personnel team has met twice since our last council meeting and is working to update policies regarding the processing of staff issues and concerns, per the council's discussion last month. When ready, the updates will be brought to the council for consideration and approval. The team also continues to work on the hiring process for the morning accounting position.

Strategic planning: The congregation approved funding for this at our annual meeting. We hope to engage in this vital and important process this year, conditions permitting. I have a handout of information for council members that can help familiarize them and also address any questions about this process that the congregation may have.

Regular and ongoing items include staff communication and coordination, congregational communication and correspondences, preparation and facilitation for teaching and preaching, pastoral acts and outreach, etc.

Staff Reports:

Custodial:

No new reports. Back-up Snowblower for Sunday mornings and weekday funerals. While we haven't experienced a concern, we would like to have a list of individuals who can be a backup. This position was approved by Council to pay \$10.00 an hour during the Council meeting held February 20, 2020. Ben Aust would be willing to help Sunday mornings and Chris Schultz is available during the weekday for funerals. Curt will connect with them.

Treasurer:

Rae presented the January financial reports for the General and Building fund and answered questions from council members.

Transfers:

No Transfers in or out this month.

Ongoing Business

Sunday School info - Poll of families being taken to determine if we should wait until Fall for in-person and continue videos or resume in-person classes.

Confirmation Camp 7th and 8th graders - see Pastor Mark's report.

VBS - looking to do after 7th grade camp in June.

Ice Cream Social - will be postponed. Looking at dates in the fall.

Lent Services - Start Feb. 17th - see Pastor Mark's report.

Getting the word out that people can come in person

Informing members of capacity numbers

Feedback on Service - Live streaming quality was fantastic. Audio was very good. All of the members of the choir were not viewable.

New Business

Vote to Confirm

Executive Committee Members - Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve Albert Koepp as president, Wendy Thies as vice-president, Rae Fimon as treasurer, and Anne Herrmann as secretary.

Ministry Team Assignments - Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the following additions to Ministry Team Members:

Ben Aust - Stewardship

Matt Stier, Steve Kelm, and Chris Schultz - Buildings and Grounds

Wendy Thies - Personnel

Jen Nagorski - Children's

Ministry Team Members 2021

Parsonage Rental Agreement - Discussion was had regarding the properties and positions of Rental Manager and Maintenance Technician. Motion was made, seconded and carried to accept Kim Meierbachtol as Rental Manager and Dan Herrmann as Maintenance Technician.

Update Parsonage lease to annual - Rental Manager will draft lease after meeting with Building and Grounds committee. The Rental Manager will review the drafted lease with the Executive Team on March 14th. Obtain feedback and present revised lease to Council on March 18th.

Notification to Renters - Rental Manager will review leases with tenants.

Positions to Fill - Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the following positions be added:

Rental Manager - Pay to be determined.

Maintenance Technician - Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve pay of \$25.00 an hour with a one hour minimum.

Fiber Optics being installed - Contract has been signed with Metronet and site visit completed. Installation to occur within 45-60 days.

Ministry Team Updates

Stewardship Committee - nothing new

Buildings and Grounds Committee - nothing new

Personnel Committee - meeting February 25th at 6 p.m.

Children's Ministry Team - nothing new - ongoing discussion about resuming Sunday School.

Small Group/Faith Formation Committee - nothing new

Worship and Music Committee - planning for Easter Services

Technology and Communications Committee - nothing new

Festivals Committee - in light of the pandemic, we will revisit committee formation at a later date.

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn at 8:01pm. Meeting was adjourned followed by the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Anne Herrmann, Secretary

Sponsor a Camper

Sponsor a 7th grader going to Camp Onomia this year! We have 24 seventh graders going to Camp Onomia this coming summer, which costs \$460 per child. Each family pays \$125 toward the cost of camp and St. John pays the remaining \$335. The total cost to St. John this year is \$8,040. If you'd like to contribute towards this cost, please consider making a special donation to the General Fund in March!

March 2021



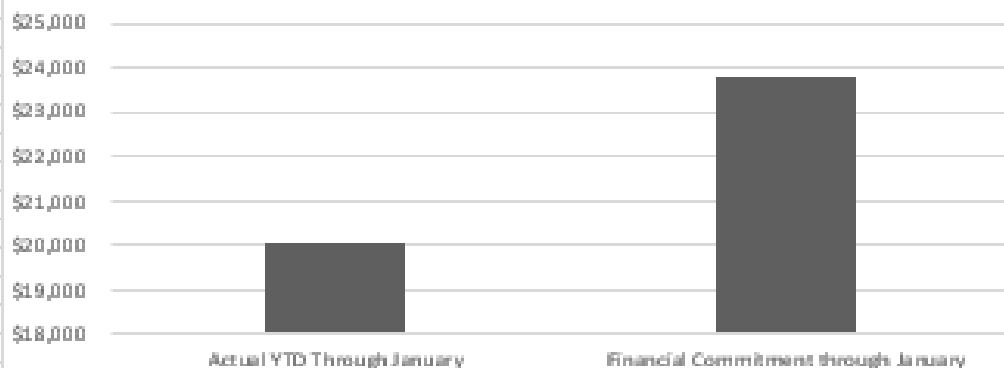
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1 Phoebe Eumertson Carter Kes Sarah Leonard Jax Overline	2 Katie Herrmann Chase Jaworski Kyle Sammons	3 Noah Homaman John Karl Amy Rosario	4 Harrison Bungarden Elmer Koepp	5 Joey Franck Clarrissa Lutterman Luke Schultz	6 Walker Herrmann Douglas Nasby
7 Lauren Tesch Shirley Youngblom	8 Courtney Bristlin Mya Holzemer	9 Lee Bessel Tim Carlson Jacqueline Johnson Curtis Koepp Alyana Lindahl Griffin Ruud	10 James Karl Wendy Koepp	11 Audrey Havemeier Jean Jackels Sarah Theis	12 Luke Andert	13
14 Alaina Buesgens Ann Carstens Alexander Rosario Roger Stier	15 Vivian Holtberg Henry Husfeldt Lucy Leonard Callie Stoutland	16 Ally Fink Michael Olson Keith Siemon Douglas Steen Landon Trost	17 Abigail Johnson	18 Kace Hutchison Brian Overline Sully Schultz	19 Megan Malz Will Posthumus Sheila Schmidt Emilyn Siemon	20 Connie Bergs Treyden Hiles Ivy Pankonin
21 Mary Kay Nasby	22 Rory Connelly Nora Hansen Blair Henke Alexandra Stauffacher Emily Vinkemeier	23 Dorothy Koepp	24 Shane Henke Roland Perkins	25 Savannah Filipek Miranda Koenig Joan Olson Bob Palmer Joseph Petersen	26 Diane Bratsch	27 Brittney Dandurand Corey Hansen Mitchel Stier
28 Eli Braun Megan Doebling Aiden Johnson Allen Koepp	29 Svea Olson	30 Landon Graff Alexzander Stier	31 Misty Johnson Nora Meuleners Carol Peterson			

Financial Corner

St. John General Fund Financial Results One Month Ending January 31, 2021 and January 31, 2020

Operating Fund	January 31, 2021	January 31, 2020	Year Over Year Increase (Decrease)
Income	\$ 20,054	\$ 22,780	-12%
Expenses:			
Personnel	(17,442)	(26,514)	
Office	(1,982)	(2,645)	
Property & Maintenance	(3,425)	(2,968)	
Ministry Teams	-	(960)	
Other	(234)	(236)	
Benevolence:			
Minneapolis Area Synod	(1,000)	(1,000)	
Lutheran Social Services	-	-	
Camp Onomia	(250)	(250)	
Net Receipts / (Expenditures)	\$ (4,279)	\$ (11,793)	
Cash Balance at January 1 (Excl. Loans)	\$ (82,735)	\$ (84,836)	
Net Income / (Expenditures)	(4,279)	(11,793)	
Misc. cash not affecting income	(586)	(1,422)	
Loan from Building Fund (2018 & 2019)	44,500	54,500	
Loan from St. John Foundation (2014-2016)	54,294	53,754	
Cash Balance at January 31	\$ 11,194	\$ 10,203	
Building Fund	January 31, 2021	January 31, 2020	
Receipts	\$ 6,907	\$ 8,634	-20%
Principal	(9,907)	(9,408)	
Interest	(653)	(1,152)	
Net Receipts / (Disbursements)	\$ (3,653)	\$ (1,926)	
Loan Balance at January 1	\$ 208,857	\$ 325,224	
Principal Payments	(9,907)	(9,408)	
Loan Balance at January 31	\$ 198,950	\$ 315,816	
Actual Income Compared to 2021 Financial Commitment:			
Actual YTD Through January	\$ 20,054		
Financial Commitment through January	23,786		

Actual Revenue v Commitment



CALLED TO SERVE THROUGH OUR GIVING

Offering Received the week of

January 28– February 3	February 4-10	February 11-17	February 18-24
General Fund—\$8,709.13	General Fund—\$3,633.81	General Fund—\$4,679.00	General Fund— \$2,800.00
Building Fund—\$4,105.00	Building Fund—\$1,778.00	Building Fund—\$4,055.00	Building Fund- \$755.00