

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH MESSENGER

CALLED TO WORSHIP / COMMITTED TO SERVE / CONNECTED IN FAITH

November 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

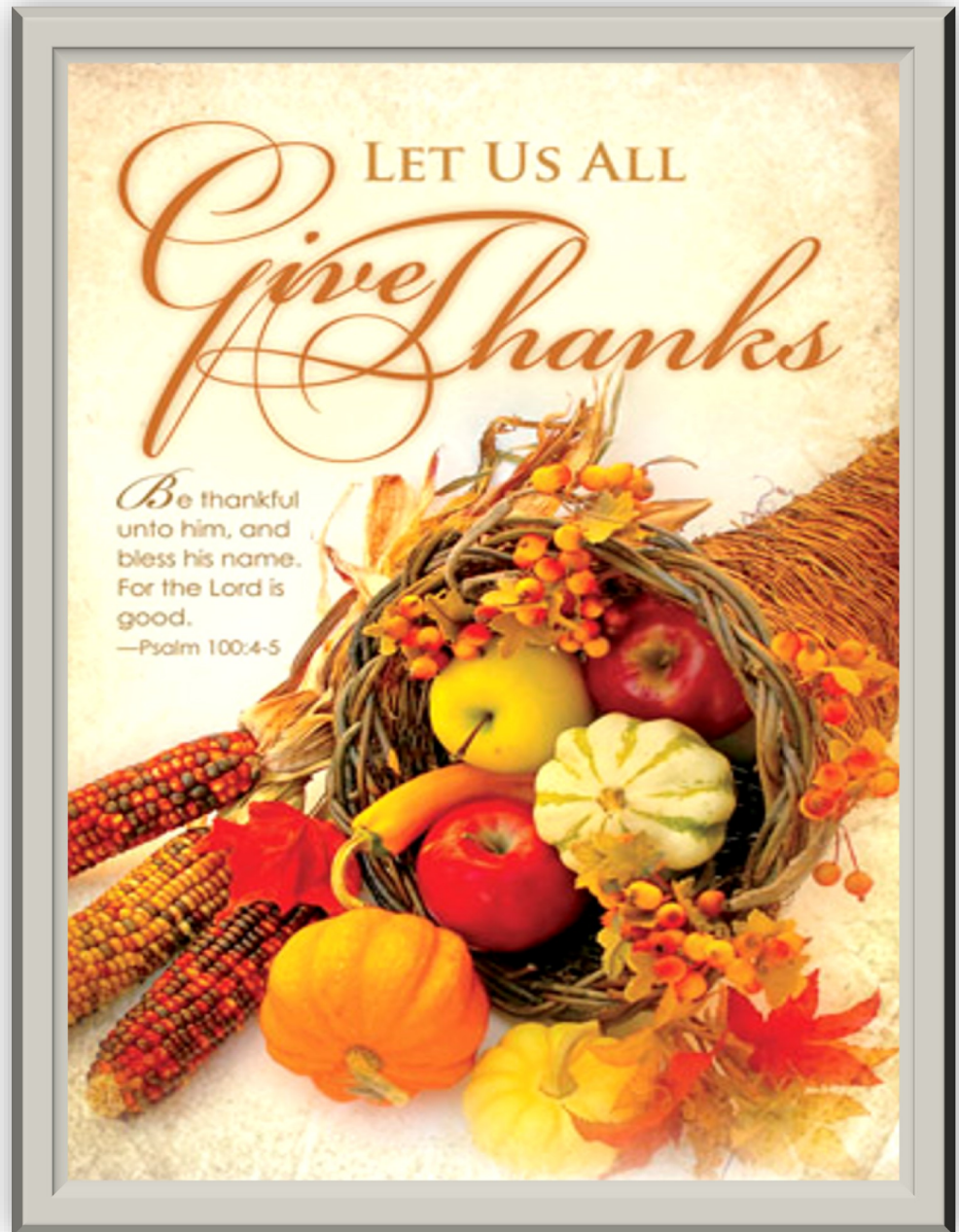
Bri Bergstrom

Accompanist

Sheila Schmidt

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Belle Plaine, MN 56011

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From Pastor Mark

*“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.
Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near.
Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer
and supplication, together with thanksgiving,
let your requests be made known to God.
And the peace of God, that passes all understanding,
will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:4-7)*

November brings with it the holiday of Thanksgiving. It is traditionally a time when families come together to share a meal and to be with each other. This year, however, is different. In order to care for each other during a pandemic, we are not supposed to get together. And, for that matter, we are enduring separation from loved ones in nursing homes and hospitals. All of the ordinary ways we are used to interacting are called into question. The familiar and comforting bonds of togetherness are strained and broken. It is a difficult time. We grow weary. And yet, as folks have been called to sacrifice for a greater cause in the past, we are called to endure and to do so today, out of love and care for one another.

Eve was surrounded by everything she needed in the Garden of Eden. The serpent came along and pointed out the one thing missing. She should not eat of the tree in the center of the garden. And pretty soon, that's all she wanted to do. She forgot about all of the good things around her and focused on the one thing she lacked. What she was missing became the center of her attention. And it brought her down.

Life can be like that. It's all too easy to forget about the positive and to focus on what is missing. And pretty soon, that becomes of primary importance and overwhelms everything else. Our whole world can be colored by what we see as lacking. And that will bring us down, too.

It's not easy to live through these times. We sorely miss the things that we have for so long taken for granted. And we will need to continue to miss them for awhile. And it does hurt. And we do acknowledge the pain of it.

And here it is that St. Paul speaks a word to us in his beautiful little letter to the Philippians. Paul was in prison when he wrote this letter, awaiting trial and possibly execution. He was cut off from loved ones. His future was anything but certain. And yet, in a larger sense, it was completely certain. For, as he says, “The Lord is near.” In prison, he could write: “Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I will say it, “Rejoice!” Why? Because “The Lord is near.” And because the Lord was near, his future was certain. No matter what might happen to him, he leaned back and rested in the promise that nothing could separate him from the love that God had for him in Christ. He knew that neither death nor life could break that bond. And so he knew that he was held, even in such a difficult time, in large hands of life and hope and grace.

Paul could have worried excessively. And, let's face it, there are times when that is pretty easy to do! But Paul goes on to say, “Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, let your requests be made known to God.” Worry and anxiety weren't going to change Paul's circumstances. So he gave it over to God. By prayer, he placed himself and his situation into the Lord's hands.

I love the little “Serenity Prayer.” There's a lot of wisdom in it. “God grant me the serenity to accept the things that I cannot change...” That includes a lot. I cannot change other people. There are circumstances beyond my control. These things I need to give over to God. The next line says, “The courage to change the things I can...” Yes, there are some things I can change. I can change some things about myself. I can make decisions about how I want to think and act and seek to follow them through. And the last line is the tricky one, “And the wisdom to know the difference...” Where is the fence line between what I can change and what I can't? We can add a lot of fret and worry onto our plates that we can't really do anything about. So it's good to be aware of that and to decide what it mine, what isn't, and what to hand over to God.

But let's also not forget the little phrase that Paul tucks in there when he tells us not to worry but to let our requests be made known to God - “together with thanksgiving.” That is very important. Our prayers can sometimes become such a laundry list of what we want God to do, “Take care of this, watch over that, etc.” that we forget what we have to be thankful for.

Giving thanks is a good antidote for worry. Remembering what we have to be grateful for is a good counterbalance to focusing on what we lack. A heart full of thanks and praise is a strong heart. And so, let us not forget to remember to give thanks in our prayers, as well. And I'd suggest not simply a general, "thanks for all my blessings" kind of thing but a thoughtful remembering and reflecting on what it is we have to be thankful for.

I love the words of the old hymn that says, "Count your blessings, count them one by one. Then, you'll see what the Lord has done." Count them one by one. Take ten minutes and sit down and write out what you have to be thankful for. Let your mind go. Brainstorm it. There are no wrong answers. Just get it out there. And then, turn your list into a prayer of gratitude. Allow yourself to sink down in warmth for all that you have to be grateful for. Take your time with it. There is no rush. Time, itself, is a gift.

Yes, we live in a stressful time. In many ways. But the Lord is near. God is good, always. God has not abandoned us or forsaken us. God is holding us in seen and unseen ways in arms of loving grace. And so let us make our requests known to God. And let us give thanks to God. And let it not be just related around a holiday once a year in November but a daily practice that we engage in. It can, and it will, change our heart and mind and life.

Thanks be to God... Mark

p.s. - There also remains much need in our world. And we can do something about it. Please check out the accompanying articles on the "ELCA World Hunger Program" - and also the special offering we will take for "The Good Samaritan Fund" that goes to help local people traveling through our area. Also, please see the Stewardship article where we ask for your support in the coming year for this ministry that we share here together. Thank you for your kind consideration of these things!



**There will be no Ecumenical Community
Thanksgiving Service this year
(due to the pandemic)
But you can still give an Offering to support our local
Good Samaritan Fund**

Our local clergy have decided together that, due to the need for separation during this time of pandemic, we will not be hosting an Ecumenical Community Thanksgiving Service this year. We think this is in the best interest of taking care of one another during these unusual times.

However, the offering we normally have as part of that service goes to support our local Good Samaritan Fund that is set up to provide assistance to transient people who are moving through our area and need help with gas, food or a room for the night. Our Thanksgiving offering is the main source of support for this fund each year. Since we are not having the service, all of our community congregations who participate in this program will be taking a special "Good Samaritan Fund" offering on Sunday, November 22 (the week before Thanksgiving).

Since many of us are not physically back in church at this time, you can simply drop off or mail in a check to the church at 148 S. Chestnut St., Belle Plaine MN 56011. Please make your check payable to "St. John" and write in the memo line "Good Samaritan Fund" so we will know that is your intention.

From Pastor Sarah

THE CHANGING OF THE SEASONS

October brought us our first snowstorm since the thaw last spring. Every year, we know it's coming, but when it arrives, we still seem to be caught a little bit by surprise. Comments about driving skills and conditions, snow shovels, and winter gear suddenly pop into our conversations, and checking the forecast to see just how heavy of a coat we will need becomes a daily routine.

There is always some worry in this transitional time, but there is excitement, too. Sleds and skis come out of storage along with the shovels and mittens. Impromptu snowball fights arise, and snow angels and people are created as the world is covered in a blanket of flakes and frost.

The days are shorter, but the stars shine sooner. In a little while, the streets will be decorated with extra lights to illuminate the early evenings. Familiar carols and Christmas tunes will start playing on the radio, and it will be almost impossible not to sing along.

At church, the seasons change, too. We have come through Epiphany, Lent, and Easter to Pentecost and Ordinary Time. In November, we will celebrate All Saints Day and Christ the King Sunday before starting all over again with Advent on November 29.

The Gospel Reading for that first week of Advent talks about watching the seasons. Jesus speaks of signs and portends, which sound ominous, but he also reminds us also that we don't know God's timing. Jesus tells the disciples to keep awake, be alert, and be ready. It's a season of watching and waiting. It's a season of anticipation.

Winter is a good season for Advent. As snowstorms keep us indoors or prevent travel, we are reminded that we are not always in control. As harvests are processed and stored, we are reminded of our dependence upon God's creation for our lives. As we experience the quieting of the world—as birds travel away and animals hibernate—we are reminded of the ebb and flow of the year. As we walk across ice and snow, we are reminded of the seeds underneath it that wait to sprout again in the spring, and we anticipate the new life that will return.

Winter is a good season for Advent. It's a good season for us to reflect on God's presence now and look ahead to the hope of what is to come.

As you journey through this month, take time to notice the changing of the seasons. Reflect on where you find God's presence in the world around you, and ask where God might be working in and through you as well.

"[Jesus said:] ...And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

--Mark 13:37

Annual Stewardship Appeal First Three Weeks in November

“Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.”

(James 1:17)

“We plow the fields and scatter the good seed on the land, but it is fed and watered by God’s Almighty hand, who sends the snow in winter, the warmth to swell the grain, the seed time and the harvest, the soft, refreshing rain.

*All good gifts around us are sent from heaven above -
then thank you Lord, thank you Lord, for all your love.”*

(ELCA Hymnary)

God starts it. All good gifts and every generous act flow down to us from God above. All that we have and all that we are is a gift from a generous God who loves us. And we have the opportunity to respond to all of God’s loving goodness as we offer back these gifts we have received, gifts of time, talents and possessions. The little prayer we pray at offering time encapsulates things very well:

“Merciful God, we offer with joy and thanksgiving what you have first given us - ourselves, our time and our possessions, signs of your gracious love.

Receive them for the sake of him who offered himself for us, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.”

Things are a little different at church this year. We miss the bustle of Sunday Schoolers and the times of fellowship together. However, we will come through this. God remains good and steadfast.

This year, we will offer a stewardship emphasis on the first three Sundays in November, reminding us of God’s generosity and inviting us to respond. One way we will do this is to encourage support for next year’s annual operating fund that supports all of the ministry that we share together. Watch for further details.

Give a Gift through ELCA World Hunger to help those in need

Traditionally, we send out “ELCA World Hunger” envelopes in our newsletter during the month of November. As we remember our blessings, we also remember that there are those in need. Offering a gift through the ELCA’s World Hunger program is a way to provide needed support.

Since the pandemic, we have started e-mailing our newsletter out. We still do mail some copies to those who prefer to receive our newsletter that way. However, under the circumstances, please note the ways that you can continue to provide support for those in need through the ELCA’s World Hunger program:

Online: Google ELCA World Hunger program and find information on how you can provide your offering online.

Through the mail: Make checks payable to the “ELCA” and please include your designation (e.g. “ELCA World Hunger”) on the memo line. Mail to: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; P.O. Box 1809; Merrifield, VA 22116-8009

Give by phone: Call 1-800-638-3522 (M - F; 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. central standard time.

Give through your congregation: Make checks payable to your congregation, write your designation (e.g. “ELCA World Hunger”) on the memo line.

Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes October 22, 2020

President Matt Stier called the meeting to order at 6:37 p.m.

Present:

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

Opening Devotions: Pastor Mark shared opening devotions

Approval of Minutes: Members of Council reviewed the minutes from the September 24, 2020 Council Meeting with the following addition: The pastors share of the Silver Plus insurance is up to 25% from 20%. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes.

Pastor Mark’s Report:

Worship Services: Drive In Worship continues through October on the front steps of the church on Saturday evenings at 6:00 p.m. We will be in discussion with the Worship and Music Team about transitioning indoors after that and how we will set up to meet the current protocols. Sunday morning in-building worship continues at 9:00 a.m. with twenty to thirty people in attendance. Services are recorded Sunday mornings and posted online on our Facebook page and website on Monday afternoons.

Bible Sunday was held on October fourth with a blessing of the Bibles during the service and a pick up of the Bible story books following the service. Connect students received a Lutheran Study Bible, which will continue to be the Bible we distribute going forward.

Ninth Grade Confirmands and families met on September 25 to make sashes, receive faith statements and Bible verse sheets, get measured for a gown, have their picture taken, and draw for a family pew and table for Confirmation Sunday. I met with each Confirmand individually the following two Sundays to review their faith statements and Bible verses for publication. Confirmation weekend features Confirmands and families gathering on Saturday, October 24, at 10:00 a.m. for professional picture taking (we are making a group collage this year), rehearsal, a speaker, and recognition and gifts for Confirmands and Small Group Leaders. Sunday, October 25, we are hosting a special Confirmation service at 1:00 p.m. This allows proper clean up time after our morning service and gives Confirmand families more space under our current limitations.

I invited our area pastors to St. John recently for our first ecumenical get together since the pandemic. We had a nice opportunity to catch up and hear about how we are all doing ministry these days. We will be taking a pass this year on our Ecumenical Community Thanksgiving service. However, we will all take special offerings in our parishes to continue to support our commonly held Good Samaritan Fund. We plan to continue to meet monthly. The Southwest Metro Conference has also been meeting virtually by Zoom monthly. Some churches have just opened their doors recently. Others have not yet and don’t plan to for the foreseeable future. Everyone is approaching things a little differently.

We have had a number of baptisms in the past month, hosting them in small family gatherings. I have also coordinated with the Activities Directors at the Lutheran Home and Kingsway to host a virtual worship service, with Holy Communion, for residents there. With a special offering for our missionary. We plan to continue hosting our worship services on the first Tuesday of each month.

We have had some need to observe our Covid protocols in the office and we will continue to abide by the best practices as directed by the Minnesota Department of Health guidelines. We continue to hold safety for all as a first priority.

I have been in touch with the Joshua Group and the James Company representatives that we plan to interview when we get back to having the opportunity to adequately engage in Strategic Planning in our congregation. I will provide an estimate for budgeting purposes for next year.

Pastor Sarah's Report:

Sunday School—The Children's Ministry Team rescheduled the 1st Graders' Bible Sunday to October 4. Students were able to pick up their Bibles along with their lesson packets for the month of October. An online option was also available to accompany the lesson video.

Connect—Connect began on September 23. Since Bible Sunday needed to be postponed, students received their Bibles on Wednesday evening during class. The teachers joined in a special Bible Blessing for them as well.

Confirmation—Confirmation Lesson Videos and Worksheets have been uploaded to a Google Drive File and a link emailed to the primary email address for each student (provided on the Confirmation Registration Form). Students, Parents, and Small Group Leaders have been working together to ensure that lessons are completed and students still are able to see their classmates each week. 9th Grade Confirmation Students have been meeting with the pastors to discuss and complete preparations for Confirmation Sunday on October 25. The Confirmation Service itself is being held separately so that congregational members can still attend regular worship services and families can bring more guests while maintaining proper distancing.

Worship—Drive-in Worship will be coming to an end as the seasons change.

Ongoing Items—Preparation continues for sermons and worship leadership, newsletter articles, and other communication pieces. Prep work, policies, and communications for Fall Programming and building use. Meetings with ministry teams and staff. Other duties as needed.

Staff Report: Custodial Updates:

No new reports - Curt will call the window company for a status. We have out 50% down.

Treasurer:

Rae presented the September financial reports. She shared that the general fund is 8% under last year, the building fund is 30% under last year. Our loan balance is under \$230,000. Curt will look into getting bids for some TV's and DVD players for the sunday school rooms. Rae asked for volunteers to look at the draft budget with her. Thanks to Matt Stier, Bob Fairbanks, Chris Stier and Wendy Theis. Rae also shared the our PPE loan is paid off and that amount (\$57,000) has been put into the budget.

Transfers:

No Transfers in or out this month.

Ongoing Business

None at this time

A **New Business**

B Confirmands

C Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the 2020 Confirmands.

Letter received from the City of Belle Plaine RE: overdue utility (water) bills.

A Matt connected with the city to get more information and also talked to the tenant. There is a letter that needs to be filled out for the rental properties. As of the writing of these minutes, the utility bills have been paid in full.

C. Annual Meeting

Discussion was had about how we will conduct the annual meeting this year. It is scheduled for the 4th Sunday of January. We will take pictures of the voters. Mail in ballots are not accepted, drive in ballots can be accepted. There has to be simultaneous communication and people have to be able to hear and speak. A motion was made to adopt a continuing resolution to hold the meeting in person and virtually for 1 year ending November 22, 2021. We will send out a letter to see if people would come in person, or attend virtually. Motion was seconded and approved. The executive committee will be meeting on Sunday, November 15th at 10:00am with a planning meeting at 10:30.

Ministry Team Updates

Stewardship Committee - meeting the 1st 3 sundays in November

Buildings and Grounds Committee - no new info

Personnel Committee - nothing new

Children's Ministry Committee - nothing new

Small Group/Faith Formation Committee - nothing new

Worship and Music Committee - Will be meeting on Wednesday, October 28th to discuss being inside for Saturday services, what that will look like, as well as discussions around Advent/Christmas.

Technology and Communications Committee - nothing new

Festivals Committee - nothing new

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn at 8:36pm. Meeting was adjourned followed by the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Albert Koepp - substituting for Angie Kahle

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 Koepp, Head Usher at 612-860-0386 (email koeppbw@frontiernet.net) or Andy Steinhagen, Assistant Head Usher at 612-581-7523 (email suesimcox@yahoo.com).

Thank You for your service!



New Member Orientation and Welcome

Our Fall New Member Orientation will be held on Sunday, November 1, from 1:00-4:00 p.m. in our Gathering Area for all those desiring membership at St. John. The following Sunday, November 8, we will acknowledge and welcome all of those who participated in the Orientation.

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

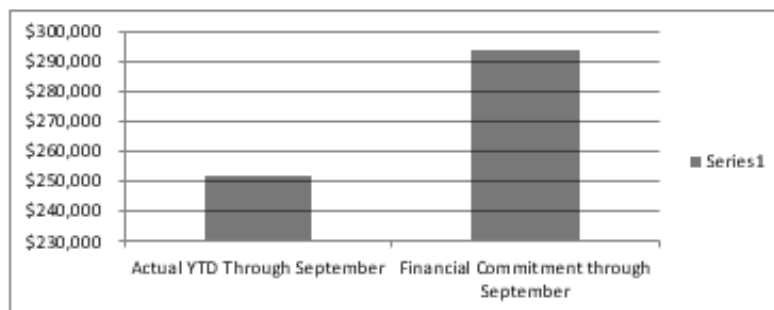
**St. John Financial Results
Nine Months Ended September 30, 2020 and September 30, 2019**

| General Operating Fund | | | | Year Over Year |
|--|---------------------------|---------------------------|--|----------------------------|
| | September 30, 2020 | September 30, 2019 | | Increase (Decrease) |
| Income | \$ 251,687 | \$ 272,957 | | -8% |
| Expenses: | | | | |
| Personnel | (224,420) | (228,903) | | |
| Office | (14,638) | (13,236) | | |
| Property & Maintenance | (29,740) | (29,235) | | |
| Ministry Teams | (14,784) | (17,503) | | |
| Other | (2,782) | (3,338) | | |
| Benevolence: | | | | |
| Minneapolis Area Synod | (9,000) | (9,000) | | |
| Camp Onomia | (2,000) | (2,250) | | |
| Belle Plaine Fire Dept | - | - | | |
| Lutheran Social Services | (1,000) | (1,000) | | |
| World Hunger (2019) | (250) | - | | |
| Net Receipts / (Expenditures) | <u>\$ (46,927)</u> | <u>\$ (31,508)</u> | | |
| Cash Balance at January 1 (excl. all loans) | \$ (84,836) | \$ (64,346) | | |
| Net Income / (Expenditures) | (46,927) | (31,508) | | |
| Misc. cash not affecting income | (222) | 92 | | |
| Paycheck Protection Loan (2020) | 54,839 | - | | |
| Loan from Building Fund (from 2018 & 2019) | 45,500 | 54,500 | | |
| Loan from St. John Foundation (from 2014-2016) | 54,114 | 53,575 | | |
| Cash Balance at September 30 | <u>\$ 22,468</u> | <u>\$ 12,313</u> | | |

| Building Fund | | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|--|------|
| Receipts | 72,917 | \$ 103,535 | | -30% |
| Miscellaneous Expenses | - | (124) | | |
| Principal | (86,831) | (82,295) | | |
| Interest | (9,209) | (12,745) | | |
| (Loaned to)/Received from General Fund | 10,000 | (19,500) | | |
| Net Receipts / (Disbursements) | <u>\$ (13,123)</u> | <u>\$ (11,129)</u> | | |
| Loan Balance at January 1 | \$ 325,224 | \$ 435,544 | | |
| Principal Payments | (86,831) | (82,295) | | |
| Loan Balance at September 30 | <u>\$ 238,393</u> | <u>\$ 353,249</u> | | |

Actual Income Compared to 2020 Financial Commitment:

| | |
|--|------------|
| Actual YTD Through September | \$ 251,687 |
| Financial Commitment through September | \$ 293,525 |



November 2020



| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|---|--|--|---|--|---|--|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
| Lincoln Klein Annette Moylan Tom Stolee | Dana Baker Brett Holbrook Andrea Jennissen Josh Koepp Harlan Laabs Colt Oldenburg | Delana Eckblad John Hilgers Logan Schultz Elisa Theis | Maverick Borresen Gilbert Bristlin Albert Koepp Anita Lambrecht | Alyssa Baker Robert Schultz | Nicole Bauléke Angela Hoff Marcy Ritsch Samuel Schultz | Joselyn Henning Shelly Trost |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| | Elise Davidson Thaine Maier | Carter Binnk John Koepp Elise Martin Olivia Petersen Val Peterson Michael Sirek | Elliot Lutterman Austin Mohlin Troy Shackle Raymond Stier | Darrel Schultz Shannon Swenson Gavin Theis | Arianna Hiles Bradley Pederson | |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| Chris Potter | Carol Stoppelmann Elsie Wolff | Donna Brenke Richard Koepp | Logan Anderson David Bungarden Katie Graff Justin Kruger Janene Meyer | Larry Behnke Susan Koenig | Paul Traylor | |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| Kristine Konarski Myron Latzke Chris Ruppert Neal Williamson | Earl Koepp | Mallory Benner Karmen Grubm Jackson Nagel Thomas Nagel | Amy Rettig Kelly Shaughnessy | Shara Hiles Sawyer Kelm March Leonard | Marv Doeden David Otto | Blakely Buszmann Caleb Eppen April Westerfield |
| 29 | 30 | | | | | |
| Virginia Bessel Cole Eggers Wendy Erhardt | Amy Stolee | | | | | |