

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH MESSENGER

CALLED TO WORSHIP / COMMITTED TO SERVE / CONNECTED IN FAITH

October 2020

A monthly Publication of
St. John Lutheran Church

Worship Schedule
Saturday night drive in
worship at 6:30 p.m.
In front of Church

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

148 S. Chestnut St.
Belle Plaine, MN 56011

952-873-6492
office@stjohnbelleplaine.org
Web: stjohnbelleplaine.org



Congratulations to all of our 9th Grade
Confirmation Students who will be
Confirmed on Sunday, October 25, at
1:00 p.m.

Savannah Kelly Berg

*Alexander DeWayne
Johnson*

Charli Jo Daylene Stier

Ethan John Bessel

Austin Patrick

Caleb Michael Tracy

Lila Ann Bungarden

Parker Todd Perry

Brennan Daniel

Tyler Matthew Gruhn

Josie Dora Schmidt

Kiya Renae Williamson

Megan Betsy Holzemer

Leo Brian Siekmann



New Member Orientation
Sunday, November 1 1:00-4:00 PM.
New Member Sunday
November 8th.

From Pastor Mark

Welcome to the beautiful season of Fall. As I write this, the colors are turning and the fields are ripening and the farmers are preparing for harvest. The world around us seems to go on as normal. And yet, as far as our lives are concerned, this Fall is different. We are six months into a pandemic that struck with unexpected force, suddenly severing us from our churches, schools and, for many, places of work. And it has been a topsy-turvy ride ever since, as we seek to navigate our way through uncharted waters.

This has been true for virtually everyone. How do we conduct business? How do we educate our children? How do we stay in touch with loved ones? How do we celebrate and mourn the happy and sad milestones of life? How do we balance safety and being together?

Along with everyone else, we have certainly been thinking through these things here at St. John. We literally went from a council meeting on a Thursday evening discussing ways to augment our service to make it safer to, two days later, holding an emergency council meeting and deciding to shut down worship and all in-door gatherings altogether. It was dizzying, disorienting and jarring. We, like everyone else, were quickly and suddenly, shut down.

We began recording our worship services in an empty Sanctuary and posting them online. And then, in an effort to provide a safe, alternative form of worship we began a drive-in worship service in June. We followed that with providing a masked, distanced in-door worship service in August. We augmented certain aspects of our worship to reduce touchable contact with individualized communion cups, a basket for offering and power point orders of service.

September is always a very busy time of year. This September brought unique challenges. We have been in touch with our Children's Ministry Team, Connect and Confirmation Leaders to communicate and collaborate on what shape things will take this year. It has been quite a process to work through and communicate with everyone what is happening. And those who are involved in various programs have been communicated with directly.

Since it is not possible to meet on Sunday mornings for Sunday School this year and have, in some cases, twenty five little ones packed into a Sunday School room with parents and teachers mixing together, our Children's Ministry Team will be providing an online lesson for families on the first Sunday of each month. Schedules and themes have been provided to our families.

Bible Sunday was rescheduled to October 4 with a blessing of Bibles in worship and with young ones picking up their Bible story book after the service.

Since fifth and sixth graders are meeting all day, every day, at school we are integrating with them for our Connect program and our fifth and sixth graders are meeting to study the Bible on Wednesday evenings, masked and spaced in our Gathering Area.

Since seventh and eighth graders are not meeting altogether at the school, we are integrating with that reality and beginning our year with online lessons and worksheets. However, small group leaders are maintaining weekly, personal contact with their small groups, some here at the church, others in places of their own choosing. Pastors are open to meeting with any students that would like further conversation about a lesson or topic. Sermon notes for fifth through eighth grades are required and can be completed through any of our worship service options and returned or e-mailed to the church.

While we were still setting things up this Summer, we thought it best to survey our fifth grade parents to see if they preferred a Fall or Spring First Communion option. Based upon the feedback we received, we are honoring their request for a Springtime First Communion. Dates and times will be communicated later, although we have thought possibly of a time during Lent and leading up to Holy Week. We will see how things unfold.

We also surveyed our ninth grade Confirmation families to see what their thoughts were concerning Fall or Spring. Based upon their feedback, we are moving forward with confirming our ninth graders this Fall. Preparatory work is underway with sash making, writing faith statement and selecting Bible verses, etc. Given our limited and distanced spacing, we want to maximize the opportunity for our ninth graders to have family present. Consequently, we will be holding a special Confirmation service on Sunday, October 25, at 1:00 p.m. for our Confirmands and their families. Saturday of that weekend, we will gather at separate family tables in the Sanctuary for some preparation and celebration to mark this special occasion. We will also be altering some aspects of the Rite of Confirmation to make it safe and yet personal and special.

We had planned on having a New Member Orientation on the first Sunday in October. However, since September has been very busy in a number of ways, we are rescheduling our Orientation for November 1st. Since we are not using pew pads these days, where people can easily self-identify their interest in becoming members, it's a bit challenging to know who wants to do that. If you, or someone you know, is interested in joining, please let us know at the church so that we can invite them and be prepared for our time together.

We are also rescheduling our Fall Stewardship appeal. Since September has been so taken up with planning and communicating a lot of things, we are rescheduling a Stewardship emphasis from October to November. All our members received a personal, confidential, year-to-date giving statement at the end of September, along with a letter explaining how we are doing financially at the church. Considering we have come through the Summer, which is always a slower time of year, not to mention a pandemic, we have done fairly well. However, as your letter indicates, we are behind in our budget needs, to date. That said, the Fall has always been a time for stepped up giving by our members. And we have been receiving some special offerings. For those of you who have been maintaining your support consistently through these times, thank you! For those of you who may not have provided a contribution yet this year, we need your help! And for those of you who are in a position to increase your support, that will be needed and very helpful!

Is everyone happy with the way things are settling in? Nobody is really happy. None of us likes to be going through what we are. None of us likes to wear masks and keep our distance. But that is the reality of this time and the way that we seek to take care of each other.

Schools, workplaces, churches, we are all struggling along trying to negotiate that delicate balance of being together in safe and responsible way. There have been a variety of ways of trying to do this in all of our settings. We have certainly been trying to negotiate these things here at the church. We have received some considerate and thoughtful feedback that has helped us to think through and modify our plans accordingly. And for that, I am thankful.

We are all under stress right now. And so, instead of allowing that to pull us apart in rancor, we have the opportunity to really practice the fundamentals of our Christian faith with love, understanding, forgiveness, reconciliation and grace. These times, particularly, are opportunities to call forth the best in us. And so, with patience and care for one another, we move forward into the future together. And it is good to know that, underneath all of our efforts, we are held by the everlasting arms of God's mercy and grace. When everything is said and done, that is the perspective that matters most.

As we all know, personal contact remains a challenge through these times. It is challenging for friends, families, and families of faith. It is hard to know who is going through a particularly challenging struggle. If you are, or if you know of someone, Pastor Sarah and I are here at the church and available to speak with you. Please feel free to give us a call. And, of course, if you are aware of someone, please reach out yourself, as well. Small things count. A call. A card. Little things can make big differences. And it takes all of us, together, to be the caring Body of Christ for one another.

As the old saying goes, "I know not what the future holds, but I know who holds the future." In the near term, that future holds many twists and turns, ups and downs. But in the longer term we know that, as the Scripture tells us, "all things work together for good to those who love God." And so, with that perspective in mind, let us keep moving forward with love and understanding and care. Let's pray for each other. Let's support each other, in the ways we can. And let's keep looking up!

-Pastor Mark

From Pastor Sarah

WHEN YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY...OR HOW TO PRAY

Last week, Confirmation Classes began. As you can imagine, this year is more than a little different. We have needed to make a lot of changes, and I have been impressed by the students' and leaders' ability to adjust and adapt as we work through our current situation.

Still, it has been very different, and the lesson last week talked about that--what we do when things change, and how we can look to our faith as a constant even in the midst of that change. As I was putting the lesson together, I realized it might be helpful for more than just those in Confirmation Class to think about these things.

There are times in our lives when we encounter an unprecedented situation, or live through an uncertain time. This whole year qualifies in both of those categories. Because it is so new, so different, we may not know what to say in every situation. We may want to take it to God in a prayer, but then realize we don't know how to start there, either.

That's okay.

There are many amazing things about God that we learn through our lives. One of those things I think is helpful right now is this: God knows us. God knows us, what we need, and what we mean to say—even if we don't know how to say it. The Apostle Paul addresses this in his Letter to the Romans:

“Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God, who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.”

-Romans 8:26-27-

This is a verse I have returned to frequently this summer. I am reminded that I need—and have—the help of the Holy Spirit all the time, and that when I realize I don't have the words, God already knows what I mean. The Spirit intercedes for us.

I am also reminded that I belong to a strong heritage of faith. There are centuries of faithful people that I can look to for inspiration. There are prayers recorded and attributed to the saints and prayers taught by church leaders. There's even the Lord's Prayer taught by Jesus himself. If I need to pray but don't know what to say, there are people that have gone before me who have given me their words to use.

What Bible verses or prayers do you find yourself returning to? Is there a song or another part of this faith tradition you lean on when you need to be reminded of what is constant? We have a deep well to draw from. As another passage from the Bible reminds us:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the sake of the joy that was set before him endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.”

-Hebrews 12:1-2-

We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses. Let us run our best race of faith, and when we don't know what to say or how to pray, let us look to those faithful witnesses and remember that God will know what we mean.

Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes September 24, 2020

President Matt Stier called the meeting to order at 6:40 p.m.

Present:

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

Opening Devotions: Pastor Sarah shared devotions

Approval of Minutes: Members of Council reviewed the minutes from the August 20, 2020 Council Meeting. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes.

Pastor Mark’s Report:

Worship Services:

Drive in Worship Services will continue through the month of September and we will see how the weather is holding up in October. We have changed the day from Wednesdays to Saturdays at 6:30 p.m. We have also changed the location from the Stier Bus parking lot to the front steps of the church.

In Building Worship Services will continue on Sunday mornings. With the attendance, and with the fact that there will be no in-building Sunday School, we have determined that we will stay with one service at 9:00 a.m.

Online Worship Services: Our recorded services will be uploaded and posted on Monday afternoons. Our services are also archived on our website.

Fall Planning

We have been communicating and collaborating as a staff and with our volunteers to determine the best way to begin our Fall season of programs. These plans can be subject to change due to circumstances. All those involved in our programs are being communicated with directly to keep them informed. To date, this includes:

Bible Distribution Sunday for our 1st and 5th Graders: We will bless the Bibles during our Sunday service on September 20 and the Bibles will be available for families to pick up after the service from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m .

Sunday School: Our Children’s Ministry Team will be monthly virtual lessons posted on the Sunday School Facebook page and emailed to all families on the first Sunday of each month, along with options for picking up lesson packets at church.

First Communion: We sent a survey to all families asking preference for Fall or Spring. Based upon their feedback, we are scheduling for Spring of 2021 during Lent and leading up to Easter.

Connect: Our Connect Team and Teachers will begin on September 23 in our Gathering Area with our 5th and 6th Graders.

Confirmation: Our Pastors and small group leaders will begin on September 23 with a video lesson and worksheet to complete and email. Small group leaders will determine ways to coordinate time with their groups and for service and fellowship opportunities. Sermon notes will be required through our variety of worship offerings. Confirmation Camp is rescheduled to next Summer.

9th Grade Confirmands: We sent a survey to all families asking preference for Fall or Spring. Based upon their feedback, we are scheduling a special Confirmation service for Sunday, October 25, with pictures at 1:00 p.m. and service at 2:00 p.m. Preparation work including sash making and faith statements will be in progress leading up to this event.

New Member Orientation will be held on Sunday, October 4, at 1:00 p.m. with a Welcome Sunday the following week for all those who participate.

Weddings, Baptisms and Funerals

We continue to host these formal events in smaller, more personal ways according to current health care guidelines. Unfortunately, we are not able to host informal meal gatherings etc. at this time.

Personnel

Our annual staff reviews have been completed by our Pastors and members of our Personnel committee. Each staff member has received and signed off on a copy of their review and summaries of all reviews have been submitted to the council for their September meeting.

Year to Date Giving Statements have been mailed to all members, including a letter and graph summarizing our current position and encouraging support for the remainder of the year.

Strategic Planning continues to be an important element in determining our ministry mission and needs, both in the short and long term. This continues to be on hold until we can engage the congregation in the in depth way we will need to for best and most complete results.

Pastor Sarah’s Report:

Sunday School—The Children’s Ministry Team will be developing a monthly video lesson to share with Sunday School Families this year, and offering a set of instructions for activities to go with the lesson to be emailed or picked up by the families. Bible Sunday for First Grade Students will be September 20, with a blessing for the Bibles at the end of worship and an outdoor Bible pickup

from 10:00-11:00 a.m. (following the 9:00 worship service).

Connect—Connect Leaders met on August 30 to plan the 2020-2021 year. Because all students are in-person at school for grades 5 and 6, the Connect Class will follow that lead and meet in-person as well. In order to properly distance, Connect will be using the Gathering Area for their class time on Wednesday Evenings. Connect will also be switching to a new curriculum and type of Study Bible, and so all 5-6 Grade students will receive a new Bible on Bible Sunday, September 20.

Confirmation—See supplemental report for Confirmation Class plan.

Worship—In-Building Worship began on August 2, with policies and procedures following the Health Department and CDC Guidelines (e.g. masks are required, and ushers seat the congregation to ensure proper distancing). Baptisms, Weddings, and Funerals also follow this protocol. Drive-in and online recordings of worship services are also still being offered for those who need or prefer a more distanced option.

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

Treasurer:

Rae presented the August financial reports for the General fund and Building fund as well as the offering projection for both the General and Building fund .

Transfers:

No Transfers in or out this month.

Ongoing Business

None at this time

New Business

Pastor's Healthcare

Rae shared that the Silver Plus plan is up to 25% from 20%

Council Job Descriptions review

The Covenant and Church Council Job description was reviewed. This will be used for all new members coming on to the council going forward.

Jim Eggers has requested to step down from the council as Vice President. We wish Jim well. Wendy Theis will replace Jim for the remainder of his term (until January 2021)

Council Seats Up this year in January - Bob Fairbanks, Chris Stier, Sue Koenig, Jim Eggers - please consider stepping up to be on the council

C. Confirmation/Connect classes update

Pastor Sarah gave the council an update on how Confirmation and Connect classes have recently begun

Ministry Team Updates

Stewardship Committee - nothing new

Buildings and Grounds Committee - have met, no new info

Personnel Committee - nothing new

Children's Ministry Committee - nothing new

Small Group/Faith Formation Committee - nothing new

Worship and Music Committee - nothing new

Technology and Communications Committee - nothing new

Festivals Committee - nothing new

Personnel Reports/Staff Reviews

The council discussed the review for Pastor Mark

Motion to accept the review, seconded and passed

The council discussed the review for Pastor Sarah

Motion to accept the review, seconded and passed

The council discussed the reviews for the church staff

Motion to accept the reviews, seconded and passed

The church will send a thank you card to Sarah Bunge from East Union Lutheran Church for filling in while both pastors were out.

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn at 9:45pm. Meeting was adjourned followed by the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,

Wendy Theis - substituting for Angie Kahle

Angie Kahle, Secretary

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.

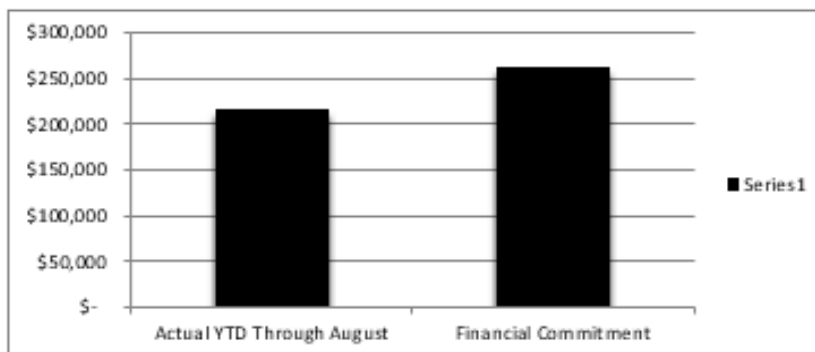
Financial Corner

General Operating Fund				Year Over Year
	August 31, 2020	August 31, 2019		Increase (Decrease)
Income	\$ 217,297	\$ 234,537		-7%
Expenses:				
Personnel	(200,698)	(204,110)		
Office	(13,546)	(12,037)		
Property & Maintenance	(26,653)	(26,923)		
Ministry Teams	(14,230)	(16,462)		
Other	(2,529)	(3,117)		
Benevolence:				
Minneapolis Area Synod	(8,000)	(8,000)		
Camp Onomia	(2,000)	(2,000)		
World Hunger (2019)	(250)	-		
Lutheran Social Services	(1,000)	(1,000)		
Net Receipts / (Expenditures)	\$ (51,609)	\$ (39,112)		
Cash Balance at January 1 (excl. all loans)	\$ (84,836)	\$ (64,346)		
Net Income / (Expenditures)	(51,609)	(39,112)		
Misc. cash not affecting income	(236)	78		
Paycheck Protection Loan (2020)	54,839	-		
Loan from Building Fund (from 2018 & 2019)	44,500	51,500		
Loan from St. John Foundation (from 2014-2016)	54,069	53,531		
Cash Balance at August 31	\$ 16,727	\$ 1,651		

Building Fund				
Receipts	\$ 64,432	\$ 89,660		-28%
Miscellaneous Expenses	-	(124)		
Principal	(77,045)	(73,018)		
Interest	(7,435)	(11,462)		
(Loaned to)/Received from General Fund	10,000	(16,500)		
Net Receipts / (Disbursements)	\$ (10,048)	\$ (11,444)		
Loan Balance at January 1	\$ 325,224	\$ 435,544		
Principal Payments	(77,045)	(73,018)		
Loan Balance at August 31	\$ 248,179	\$ 362,526		

Actual Income Compared to 2020 Financial Commitment:

Actual YTD Through August	\$ 217,297
Financial Commitment	\$ 263,047



October 2020



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Jim Eggers Brenda Schultz	2 Ethel Beuch David Latzke Wyatt Schort	3 Jeffrey Hanson Wanda Overline Caden Vycital
4 Genise Aretz Ron Gerres Jay Schmit Marie Stier Hanna Tharaldson	5 Cameron Hanek Kennedy Koch Jeremy Nagorski	6 Austin Eyrich Carson Herrmann Brenda Nyblom	7 Justin Doebling Chelsea Hutchison Lillianne Kahle Adnanna Sammons Eldora Schmidt	8 Jaelyn Borresen Charles Davidson Tessa Menke	9 Shane Theas	10 Adrian Koepp Kolin Stier
11 Mike Herrmann Greg Schwichtenberg	12 Ezden Henning Austyn Holm	13 Brandon Legg Lois Schmidt	14 Brenden Eyrich Tyler Grieves	15 Alecia Meuleners Jonathan Schmidt	16 Marc Chevalier Zackary Costello Derrick Graff Jessianna Kluver Hailee Sammons Mikkel Schmidt Lori Wolff	17 Melissa Davidson McKenzie Koepp Richard Rickaby Scott Ruud
18 Holden Kelm Andrew Winterfeldt	19 Laura Schaefer	20 Sara Fahey Everly Maier Michael Nagel Carol Rodriguez Emma Stringer	21 Joel Hansen Josselyn Lopez Dale Meierbachtol	22 Hunter Olson	23 Aria Johnson Lamoyne Mattick Mark Swenson	24 Jeff Eppen Elizabeth Nagel
25 Hanna Fairbanks Scott Koepp Tianna Sammons Trena Williamson Audrey Zellman	26 Tori Schroeder	27 Ellie Oldenburg	28 Bruce Arola Ashley Olson	29 Ethan Bessel Easton Cecka Mandy Posthumus	30 Wayne Koepp Jeremy Schwartz	31 Kaitlyn Hanson Tristan Holbrook Michelle Melheim