

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH MESSENGER

CALLED TO WORSHIP / COMMITTED TO SERVE / CONNECTED IN FAITH

September 2020

A monthly Publication of
St. John Lutheran Church

Worship Schedule

Wednesday night drive in
worship at 6:30
located at the Stier bus lot
through Sept. 2.

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



Fall Worship and Programs

Worship Services

Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m.

Sundays at 9:00 a.m.

Fall Programs

Virtual Sunday School (Pre-school through 4th Grade)

Connect (5th and 6th Grades)

Confirmation (7th and 8th Grades)

First Communion

9th Grade Confirmation

Bible Distribution

New Member Orientation and Welcome

Stewardship

Extra Helpers

Look inside for more information on all the above.

From Pastor Mark

Given the polarized times we are living in, I thought I'd attach a copy of my sermon for August 30 for my newsletter article this month. The text I am using is Romans 12:9-21. Look that up in your Bible.

It is troubling to hear the level of hostile and vitriolic rhetoric being used by both sides of the political spectrum these days. One side routinely demonizes the other. We have moved from disagreeing to denouncing. And that's a dangerous place to be.

Pardon the grammatical and capitalizing errors. I am aware of them. I write this way to more easily catch my eye while speaking...

I remember, back in the 70's, when politics was boring. Jimmy Carter vs. Gerald Ford. You might vote for one but you could certainly live with the other. Walter Cronkite, admired for his honest objectivity, reported the news to us on TV. We all operated from a standard narrative that we felt we could trust.

Not so today. We live in a fractured world. The internet and a variety of media outlets offer very different points of view. Conspiracy theories abound. We inhabit our own little worlds that seem to have little in common with each other.

This has led us to become Tribal and Polarized from one another. This Polarization leads to Fear and Scapegoating - looking for someone or something to blame. And, in Classic Star Wars Theology, Fear leads to Anger / Anger leads to Hate / And Hate leads to the Dark Side.

We can come to a place where we see those who are different from us - not just as Opponents with a different point of view - but as Enemies. And there is a need, not just to Defeat them but to Destroy them. And that's a Dangerous Place to be.

Nothing good or fruitful or productive can grow out of the blasted soil of Anger and Hatred and Contempt. Only something twisted and stunted and misshapen.

Now in these Polarized times how shall we respond? One way is to Amp up the Conflict. Someone strikes out at you - you strike back at them - only harder. That's one way. "An Eye for an Eye." But an Eye for Eye eventually makes the Whole World Blind.

In our Reading for today, we are nearing the end of Paul's letter to the Romans. At this point in his letter, Paul is offering bits and pieces of practical advice in living the Christian life: Let Love be Sincere / Be Joyful in Hope - Patient in Affliction - Faithful in Prayer...

And then, we get down to this piece of Advice:

Do not repay Evil with Evil - but overcome Evil with Good
If your Enemy is Hungry - give him something to Eat
If your Enemy is Thirsty - give him something to Drink
For by so doing, you will heap burning coals upon his head."

Now this last line sounds a bit strange, "Heap burning coals upon his head?" What does that mean? Well, Paul didn't have a word for Conscience in his day. But he describes it here. If your Enemy is hungry - and you feed him - you appeal to his Conscience. If you love your Enemy - it's going to mess with his head. It's going to feel like he has burning coals on his head - the burning coals of an Awakened Conscience.

Love your Enemies? How do we do that? Well, it doesn't mean that we have to Like them. Let's not confuse Love with Like. There are some people, let's face it, that can be hard to Like. But we can still love them. Like is a Feeling. Love is an Action. Like is an Emotion. Love is a Verb.

Do not repay Evil with Evil - but overcome Evil with Good.

Martin Luther King Jr. offers the practical advice that he used during the Protests for Civil Rights when he says, "Returning Hate with Hate simply multiplies Hate - Hatred cannot drive out Hatred - only Love can do that. Darkness cannot drive out Darkness - only Light can do that."

And he goes on to say: "Hate scars the soul and distorts the personality. Left unchecked, hatred is like a cancer that corrodes the personality and eats away at the soul."

And then he adds, "Love is the only force capable of transforming an Enemy into a Friend. We never get rid of an Enemy by meeting hate with hate. - We get rid of an Enemy by getting rid of Enmity. By its very nature, Hate Destroys and Tears Down.

By its very nature, Love Creates and Builds Up."
Love has within it the very Power of Redemption.

So what does this mean, in a practical sense? It doesn't mean that we roll over and agree with those we disagree with. We can still stand up for how we see things, but we can do so without Shouting. We can hold our Position, but we can do so with Grace. Most of all, it means that we don't lose sight of the Essential Humanity of those we disagree with. For we are all Children of God.

That's certainly what Martin Luther King tried to live by. That's certainly how Jesus lived. And it wasn't easy. It Cost Them. It's Easy to Hate. It's Hard to Love. Love requires Courage. The High Road requires Strength.

We are living in Polarized Times. But not the most Polarized. In his 1st Inaugural Address, before the 1st Shots were fired in the Civil War, Abraham Lincoln appealed to the disaffected citizens of the South, saying: "We are not Enemies, but friends. We must not become Enemies." And to an Elderly woman who chastised him for not calling the people of the South irreconcilable Enemies who must be Destroyed - Lincoln responded: "Madam, do I not Destroy my Enemies when I make them my Friends?"

In the end, we must not Lose Sight of each other and our Shared Humanity. We must remember that we are all Imperfect but Divinely Loved Children of God. And we must remember that God calls us to lift up and love All of God's Children -

Especially those who are Different from us -

Especially those who are Least and Lost and Forgotten

Especially those who are Vulnerable and Weak and in Need

The Prophet Micah asks, "What shall I bring before God and what does the Lord require? Shall I bring Sacrifices and Offerings? Listen, O Mortal. This is what the Lord requires of you - To do Justice - To Love Kindness - and to Walk Humbly with your God."

Nadia Bolz-Weber writes: "Whenever we draw a line, Jesus is on the Other Side." You really have to think about that one. When I am tempted to dismiss someone, it's Jesus standing there. It is a Child of God. It is a Brother or a Sister Created in God's Image.

What would Jesus do?

From Pastor Sarah

TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY

The past few weeks have brought us a couple of readings from the Book of Isaiah that have resonated with me. If you've been watching our online worship services, you've heard about the vastness of God's kingdom as well as its permanence through time. We talked about looking for God in traditions and continuing to look for God's work in the world now. This reminded me of another conversation that seems to resurface from time to time.

When talking about worship services, there is a question that often arises: Is it traditional or contemporary? Usually, this question is followed by another: Which do you prefer?

My answer hasn't changed over the years—I like variety. This opinion tends to push back against both sides of the argument, which basically means that no one likes my answer.

The question itself is problematic, though, too. Just defining “traditional” and “contemporary” is a difficult thing to do. How many times do you need to repeat something before it is traditional? If it's older than I am, is it still contemporary?

For the purpose of engaging rather than avoiding the question, let's say that traditional is anything more formal and familiar to a congregation, and contemporary is newer and less formal. If we look at it this way, we can begin to see the value in variety.

“Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness, you that seek the LORD. Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. Look to Abraham your father and to Sarah who bore you; for he was but one when I called him, but I blessed him and made him many.”

Isaiah 51:1-2

Traditions remind us of the heritage of our faith. When we sing a traditional hymn or recite a prayer or creed, we connect with the generations before us who also sang these songs and prayed these words. Sometimes we connect across decades or centuries of faithful followers who have passed this faith on to us through these traditions. Tradition is essential in knowing—really knowing—that we are part of this story of God's people. We are part of a story that stretches back to the beginning of time itself.

“Thus says the Lord GOD, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, I will gather others to them besides those already gathered.”

Isaiah 56:8

Yet, God continues to work in the world. Just by working in the world, God offers us new ways to experience and recognize God. God also gathers new people with different ideas and experiences, which changes things for those already gathered. Contemporary songs, spontaneous prayers, and new confessions of faith open up ways for the Holy Spirit to move and engage with us as we live and grow and encounter this world, too.

So, when asked which I prefer—contemporary or traditional—my answer is always both. I hope, whatever your preference, you can see the value in each as well.

A Letter from Camp Onomia



Camp Onomia
14202 Shakopee Rd.
Onamia, MN 56359
(320) 532-3767
camponomia.org

July 19, 2020

Dear Friends of Camp Onomia,

As you know, our board of directors recently made the difficult decision to cancel 2020 Summer Camp overnight programming due to the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time, state regulations do not allow for any overnight resident camps to operate, and they do not know when that may change with the current trends in the pandemic.

In an effort to stay connected with our youth and families, and to offer a safe Camp Onomia experience this summer that is compliant with state regulations, we are offering day-long "Summer Splash" events hosted at your church or at Camp (visit camponomia.org for details).

Our summer camp counselors, many of whom are returning from last year, are eager to provide meaningful, faith-building experiences for our youth and families during this difficult and uncertain time. When they're not busy hosting day camps, summer staff will tackle maintenance projects around Camp and delve into personal development and leadership training.

Our board of directors is committed to employing these dedicated servants of Christ for the remainder of their summer contracts. While we have always worked diligently to maintain a strong financial position, the reality is that lack of income from our usual summer programming (and potentially fall retreats) will deeply affect Camp Onomia's financial situation.

We are asking our camp families and member congregations to prayerfully consider making a gift, as you are able, to support Camp Onomia during this financial dry period.

Outlined in the form below are several gift levels that will support specific needs during this time. Our immediate goal is to raise \$25,000 to help cover the salaries of our camp staff through the summer. As always, we are grateful for gifts of any size!

Questions? Email onomiaexec@gmail.com (best) or call 320-532-3767. Until we are again able to gather and worship our awesome God along the shores of Shakopee Lake, peace be with you.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Schmidt".

Jim Schmidt, Executive Director

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rev. Kari Pancoast".

Rev. Kari Pancoast, Board President

Camp Onomia is important to me. I want to make a special gift to support Camp during the COVID-19 pandemic. Check one:

- _____ \$1500 – Sponsor a camp counselor for a month
- _____ \$500 – Sponsor a camp counselor for a week
- _____ \$250 – Sponsor a camp maintenance project
- _____ \$100 – Sponsor a camp counselor for a day
- _____ \$50 – Sponsor a day of "Summer Splash" day camp
- _____ \$ Other amount

Detach and mail with your gift to:

CAMP ONOMIA
14202 Shakopee Lake Road
Onamia, MN 56359

Alternatively, you may make a secure gift online at:

camponomia.campbraingiving.com

THANK YOU!
Your generosity to Camp Onomia
is deeply appreciated.

Fall Headlines

Living in the midst of the current pandemic, we are sailing into a different Fall. Normally, after the Summer, we would be prepping up for a return to in-house programs starting up. Thankfully, in the age we live, we have online options that we can employ. Most, if not all the churches I've been in contact with, are using this option and we plan to begin the year this way and see how things develop. As we all know, we are living through uncertain times and it's hard to say how conditions might change.

That said, here are some headlines about how our Fall programs are shaping up here at St. John. More information is being provided directly through e-mail, etc. to those who are involved in specific areas of our programs.

Worship:

We plan to continue our Wednesday Drive-In Service through September and, if the weather holds, possibly later (stay tuned). Our last service at the Stier Bus lot will be September 2. After that, the lot will no longer be available for our use. Thank you to Stier Bus for the use of their lot this Summer! Beginning September 9 we will host our Drive In Service on the front steps of the church. Given the number of cars that have been attending, we should be able to accommodate our group with the parking available in front of the church.

Since we began our Sunday morning 9:00 a.m. worship in August, we have averaged about twenty people per Sunday. Given this (and with no in-building Sunday School right now) we plan to continue this Fall with one service at 9:00 a.m. Given that we are not engaging in public singing as this time, please know that our choir is currently on hiatus.

Sunday School - (PreSchool through 4th Grade):

See article on the next page.

Connect - (5th and 6th Grade):

Our Connect Leaders and Teachers are currently working on their schedule and lesson plans for the year. They will be in direct touch with the children and families involved. Registration is currently open online. Many thanks to our fine volunteer leaders who provide their time and love and support to our families through this program.

Confirmation - (7th and 8th Grade):

Registration is currently open online. Pastors will provide a large group lesson online, along with worksheets to return. Small Group Leaders will be in contact with their youth and families to organize ways of interacting with their groups. Sermon notes are required and can be done the way they were last Spring by viewing the service online and returning a note.

First Communion - (5th Grade):

We sent a survey to our fifth grade families asking if they preferred a Fall or Spring time. The majority opted for next Spring, so we will honor that feedback. We have currently penciled in March 21, 2021 as a First Communion Class and March 28 (Palm Sunday) as a First Communion Sunday.

9th Grade Confirmation

We sent a survey to our ninth grade families regarding a choice of Fall or Spring. The majority opted for this Fall, so we will honor that feedback. In preparation, we are selecting a date for our ninth graders to come to church to receive a packet containing materials for them to make their sash, as well as a document that will help them write their faith statements and select a Bible verse. We will also take their picture and, with limited pew space, have a drawing for a family pew in the Sanctuary (as we have done for the past couple of years). The Confirmation service will be on Sunday, October 25, at 2:00 p.m.

Bible Distribution

We will be blessing Bibles for our first and fifth graders during our 9:00 a.m. Sunday service on September 20. Our students who attend service can pick their Bible up after the service right away. If they are not at the service, they can pick their Bible up between ten and eleven that morning. Of course, we all need masks while we are in the building.

New Member Orientation and Welcome

We hold these events twice a year, Fall and Spring, for those who wish to become members of St. John. We will host our Orientation session on Sunday, October 4, in the Gathering Area from 1 - 4 p.m. Our Welcome Sunday, for all who participate, will be a week later on October 11. Please let us know soon at the church if you want to become a member so we can invite you!

Stewardship

Like we did last year, we plan to highlight our gifts and blessings during the first three Sundays in October and to invite people to consider raising their current level of financial support for next year's General Operating budget by a specific amount - 5, 10, 15 or 20 dollars a week. We also invite those who are not currently giving to begin doing so at an amount that makes sense for them. If we all respond, that will strengthen our foundation for a vital and sustaining ministry into the future.

Extra Helpers

During this unusual time, we are asking for extra help for a Clean Team - (volunteers who can help wipe and disinfect our common areas if we have need for a quick turn around between events, such as a funeral or wedding next to a Sunday morning).

We currently have one volunteer to facilitate our Sunday morning power point, which we rely on without printed bulletins during this time. The power point is all done and ready to go. What we are looking for are volunteers who can click the button on the computer and follow along through the service. Pretty easy! Can you help? Give us a call.

Since we are recording our services for online posting now, we are also looking for extra camera operators. We currently have one volunteer but we will need more. The more hands, the lighter the work!



Sunday School Update!

Virtual Sunday School (2020-2021)

For the health and safety of our children and volunteers, we have decided to cancel our in-person Sunday School classes. But don't worry, we have planned some wonderful lessons, videos and crafts so your children's faith and love of God can continue to grow!



The Children's Ministry Team has put together monthly virtual lessons that will be posted on the Sunday School Facebook Page and emailed out to all families the first Sunday of every month, along with options for picking up your lesson packets at church. We will miss seeing your children's smiling faces every week, but our top priority is to keep all of our children and volunteers safe and healthy. We ask that all Sunday School families take a minute to fill out the following survey (scan the QR code below) so that we can prepare our lessons and get them in the hands of all families that would like to participate in our 2020-2021 Virtual Lessons.

Important Upcoming Dates:

Sunday, September 20th - BIBLE SUNDAY - 1st and 5th grade students may pick up their bibles from 10am-11am. We will have a table set up by the front doors so we are able to maintain social distancing for all children.

Sunday, October 4th - 1st Virtual Lesson - "Four Friends" Matthew 9:1-8

Thank you for helping us to navigate this new way of learning with your children.

God's blessings,
The Children's Ministry Team

Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes August 20, 2020

President Matt Stier called the meeting to order at 6:55 p.m. (technical difficulties)

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
	Mya Holzemer	X	Sue Koenig	x	Chris Zellman		Chris Stier
X	Bob Fairbanks		Curt Johnson	X	Jennifer Nagorski		

Opening Devotions: Pastor Mark shared devotions

Approval of Minutes: Members of Council reviewed the minutes from the July 16, 2020 Council Meeting. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes.

Pastor Mark's Report:

Worship Services: We have had a couple of months of drive-in worship services at Stier Bus on Wednesday evenings with around twenty or so vehicles joining us. We will look to an alternative day or location as possibilities to continue through September. We began in-building worship August 2 with strict protocols around masking, distancing and sanitizing. Average attendance for these few weeks has been around 25. Without a significant increase (and with no in-building Sunday School) we plan to stay with one service into the Fall. As usual, we continue to record and post our weekly services online.

Fall Planning: In an effort to balance continuity with practicality and safety, our staff, in coordination with the Children's Ministry Team and with volunteers, will begin by providing our Sunday School, Connect and Confirmation classes online. We are in the process of working out those details. We are also surveying our Ninth Grade Confirmation families and our First Communion families as to whether they prefer Fall or Spring. We are also working out details of how these events can take place. New Member Orientation and Welcome are planned for the first two consecutive Sundays in October.

Weddings / Baptisms / Funerals

Onsite, we continue to provide smaller occasions, according to our health care guidelines, for these events.

Personnel: The Personnel Ministry Team, in collaboration with the pastors, is currently in the process of meeting with each of our paid staff for their annual reviews. We will be providing the council with brief summaries of these reviews for our September meeting.

Strategic Planning: Earlier this year our council agreed that it was an important and vital thing for our congregation to engage in some important questions as we prepare to pay off our mortgage and plan for our future together. What shape will our ministry take? How will we invest in staffing to meet our growing needs? How shall we best use our property resources? These vital considerations are currently on hold until we can get back together to listen to and engage the congregation with the quality and depth that such discussions deserve.

Southwest Conference: St. John is part of the Southwest Conference of the Minneapolis Area Synod, composed of around twenty ELCA congregations. We had a Zoom Meeting with about 10 congregations attending on 8/20. A couple of congregations have begun an outdoor service. Most are not meeting for in-building worship and don't plan to for quite awhile. Churches are looking for online options. There is some anxiety out there as we move into a very different Fall.

Pastor Sarah's Report:

Online Ministry—Worship services and updates continue to be posted as a way to stay connected to the St. John community.

Sunday School—The Children's Ministry Team is looking at developing a monthly distanced program

to start the year, including videos and activity or craft instructions for the lessons selected. The registration form for this year will also include a survey to determine what families and parents will engage in so that the program can be organized effectively.

Connect—Connect Leaders will be meeting next week to plan the coming year.

Confirmation—Small Group Leaders for 7th Grade are being finalized. The Confirmation Program will likely have a distanced structure for the Large Group Lessons each week, with Small Groups coordinating to check in with each other regularly as a way to remain more connected. Planning is still in progress. The council discussed if it would be possible to have the groups of students come in at least face to face once a month or staggered to allow for some personal interaction while still social distancing.

In-Building 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). 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. 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 Updates:

Lift is outside to measure and size the stained glass windows.

Treasurer: Rae presented the July financial reports for the General fund and Building fund as well as the property improvement and the Earl Stier Bequest summary. The council discussed thoughts about how to project going forward with the pandemic and the revenue coming into church. The consensus was to inform the congregation about where we are at and options we have. Rae can project numbers based on incoming revenue and if the current trend would continue. Information in the monthly messenger and a congregational letter will be forthcoming.

Transfers:

No Transfers in or out this month.

Ongoing Business

None at this time

New Business

A. Discussion about the Pastoral staff connecting with elderly, shut-ins and members and families that have deceased. It has been happening mostly via phone calls and emails. Conversation was had about prayer chains, phone trees, and other ways of connecting as well as reaching out to those members in person by either other congregational members and/or both pastors. Providing these groups of members with communion was also discussed.

Ministry Team Updates

Stewardship Committee - nothing new

Buildings and Grounds Committee - have met, no new info

Personnel Committee -doing reviews, will discuss next month

Children's Ministry Committee - have met, discussions still going

Small Group/Faith Formation Committee - nothing new

Worship and Music Committee - nothing new

Technology and Communications Committee - nothing new

Festivals Committee - nothing new - No Ice Cream Social this year

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn at 8:24pm. Meeting was adjourned followed by the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
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

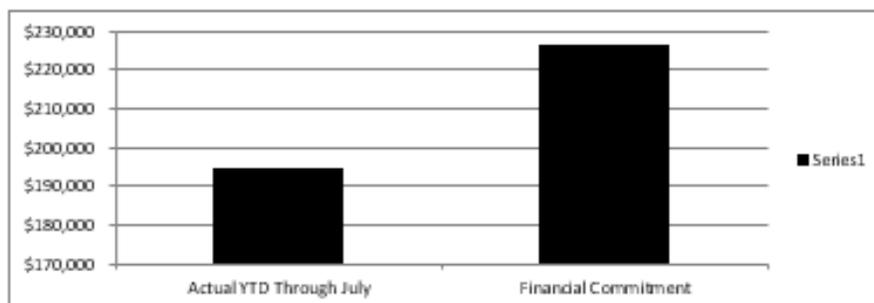
**St. John Financial Results
Seven Months Ending July 31, 2020 and July 31, 2019**

General Operating Fund			Year Over Year Increase (Decrease)
	July 31, 2020	July 31, 2019	
Income	\$ 194,469	\$ 210,274	-8%
Expenses:			
Personnel	(176,551)	(178,028)	
Office	(12,437)	(10,820)	
Property & Maintenance	(23,853)	(24,076)	
Ministry Teams	(14,260)	(15,974)	
Other	(2,267)	(2,723)	
Benevolence:			
Minneapolis Area Synod	(7,000)	(7,000)	
Camp Onomia	(1,750)	(1,750)	
World Hunger (2019)	(250)	-	
Lutheran Social Services	(1,000)	(1,000)	
Net Receipts / (Expenditures)	\$ (44,899)	\$ (31,097)	
Cash Balance at January 1 (excl. all loans)	\$ (84,836)	\$ (64,346)	
Net Income / (Expenditures)	(44,899)	(31,097)	
Misc. cash not affecting income	(236)	(104)	
Paycheck Protection Loan	54,839	-	
Loan from Building Fund (from 2018 - 2019)	44,500	44,500	
Loan from St. John Foundation (from 2014-2016)	54,024	53,542	
Cash Balance at July 31	\$ 23,392	\$ 2,495	

Building Fund			
Receipts	\$ 57,469	\$ 81,814	-30%
Miscellaneous Expenses	-	(124)	
Principal	(67,291)	(63,775)	
Interest	(6,629)	(10,145)	
(Loaned to)/Received from General Fund	10,000	(9,500)	
Net Receipts / (Disbursements)	\$ (6,451)	\$ (1,730)	
Loan Balance at January 1	\$ 325,224	\$ 435,544	
Principal Payments	(67,291)	(63,775)	
Loan Balance at July 31	\$ 257,933	\$ 371,769	

Actual Income Compared to 2020 Financial Commitment:

Actual YTD Through July	\$ 194,469
Financial Commitment	\$ 226,343



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