

# ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH MESSENGER

CALLED TO WORSHIP / COMMITTED TO SERVE / CONNECTED IN FAITH

September 2021

A monthly Publication of  
St. John Lutheran Church

## **Worship Schedule**

Saturday night  
worship at 6:00 p.m.  
In Gathering Area

Sunday Worship 8:00 a.m.  
In Person Worship or Watch  
Live on Facebook

### Pastor

Pastor Mark Johnson

### Office Staff

Audrey Zellman

### Treasurer

Rae Fimon

### Custodians

Curt & Cheryl Johnson

### Organist

Eileen Hanlon

### Accompanist

Sheila Schmidt

148 S. Chestnut St.  
Belle Plaine, MN 56011

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



## Fall Schedule

September 12  
Rally Day  
Backpack Blessing  
Bible Sunday  
Teacher Installation  
Sunday School Open House

## ***Fall Worship hours start September 12th***

We will be starting our Fall Worship  
hours September 8th.  
Sunday Worship at 8:00  
Sunday School at 9:15  
Saturday Worship will start  
September 11th at 6:00 pm.



September 15  
Connect and Confirmation  
Orientation  
6:00 pm

September 26th  
First Communion Instruction  
5:00pm

October 3  
First Communion Sunday



## *From Pastor Mark*

It's been quite a year. Last year we had our last Sunday service on March 8, our last Wednesday evening Lent worship and supper on March 11, and the council met on Saturday, March 14, and made the decision to close the doors due to the coronavirus. The council made the decision that we would follow the Minnesota Department of Health's guidelines.

We moved our worship services online. We offered a drive-in worship service on Wednesday evenings (and a special Christmas Eve drive-in service). We opened the doors for in-person worship on Sundays in July, with strict protocols according to Minnesota Department of Health guidelines. We went a year without Sunday School. We followed the school's lead for our Wednesday evening Connect and Confirmation programs, with in-person and online formats. We gradually opened things up more and more, as guidelines allowed. Our 9th graders were confirmed in the Fall. Our 5th graders had First Communion in the Spring. The choir sponsored our Midweek Lenten Holden Evening Prayer service around our weekly theme of "Basic Lutheran Beliefs." Our 7th and 8th graders went to Bible Camp this Summer.

Vaccinations became available and more people began to feel safe about being out. Masks came off for the vaccinated and things began to loosen up considerably. And then we began to hear about the new Delta variant and spikes in infections. Just as we thought we were getting back to normal, this unexpected curve ball came along. Masking is not mandated in many places but is recommended in most places.

We're living through uncharted times. We've never ridden this horse before. We're all feeling our way along, churches and schools, businesses and communities, making adjustments as we go. There is no playbook and different groups are making different decisions. For our part, I think the council's decision to follow the Department's guidelines is a wise one. And our guiding principle, as a church, is to love one another and to take care of each other. So we will continue to walk and pray our way along together and we ask the good Lord to grant us insight and wisdom and patience and understanding.

Please note: Beginning September 12 (Rally Sunday), our church council decided at its August meeting to gradually ramp up our Sunday morning schedule with one service at 8:00 a.m., followed by Sunday School at 9:15 a.m. (*Starting September 11 we will also have a Saturday service at 6:00 p.m.*) The idea is to see how attendance is on Sunday mornings before possibly adding a second service at 10:30. The council also decided that we would be coordinating with the school in following Covid protocols. We thought it was a good idea to have a consistent approach for families with the school and with the church. Stay tuned!

That said, we have been quite busy over the Summer making plans and ramping up for the Fall in a variety of ways. Our last 9:00 a.m. Sunday service will be Labor Day weekend, September 5. Then on September 12 (as mentioned above) we will have one service at 8:00 a.m., followed by Sunday School at 9:15 (*with Saturday evening services at 6:00*).

Coffee time after worship is planned to begin in October. Please look for a sign up sheet to help out. Our council has made the decision that food can be served as long as someone is serving it. Please be aware of that.

On Rally Sunday, parents and students can spend time in their child's classroom meeting their teachers. Sunday School classes will begin the following week. Our Rally Sunday service at 8:00 a.m. will feature a Backpack Blessing for all students pre-K through 12 grades, Bible Distribution to our 1st and 5th Graders, as well as a thanks and recognition for our teachers, leaders and helpers during our coming year.

5-6 Grade Connect students and parents, as well as 7-8 Grade Confirmation students and parents will meet on Wednesday evening, September 15, at 6 p.m. for an Orientation to the coming year for these Wednesday evening programs. Wednesday formats feature pizza from 5:30-6:00 p.m., class from 6:00-7:00 p.m. and then, just for Confirmation, small group time from 7:00-7:30 p.m.

9th Grade Confirmands will be confirmed this year on Sunday, October 31, at a special 10:30 a.m. worship service. Students and families will attend a special Saturday morning time of picture taking, rehearsal, brunch and program on this weekend, as well. 9th Graders will meet with Pastor Mark on Sunday, October 3, to begin preparing for their Confirmation weekend.

The choir will begin rehearsal on September 22 under the direction of Sheila Schmidt while we look for a permanent Director to replace Bri Bergstrom.

New Member Orientation for all those who wish to become members at St. John is held twice a year in the Spring and Fall. Our Fall Orientation is set for Sunday, October 3, at 1:00 p.m. in our Gathering Area. Please contact us at the church office and let us know if you plan to attend. Welcome Sunday will be the following Sunday for those who attend.

This time of pandemic has also been a challenge financially. Many of you have continued to give your regular support in a safe, easy, convenient way through our online giving options located on our church's website. Many others have continued to bring physical offerings to the church with you as you come to worship. Thank you for your continued support of the ministry that we share here together. It is needed and appreciated! And I look forward to a robust and generous Fall as we come back together!

I also want to express my gratitude to the many volunteers who help to make our ministries happen. We are truly the Body of Christ together in this place and it takes a lot of willing hands and hearts to sponsor all of our activities. Thank you to all of you who give of your time and talent to make our ministries happen!

I'm excited for the excitement to return this Fall. While it's been good to offer our worship services online, and we will continue to do that, nevertheless, worship in it's best sense is not an online product to be consumed but a communal gathering to be shared and experienced. With that in mind, I look forward to seeing many of you in real time again.

Of course, pastoral acts continue through this time as well with baptisms, weddings, funerals, visitation, counseling, etc. There is time each week for worship and sermon and lesson planning, as well as regular staff, council and ministry team meetings, communication and coordination with our staff and volunteers and congregation, etc. I'm not always the best at self care and recognizing my own needs, so I am trying to be more aware of that and seeking ways to continue to be refreshed and renewed. We have a good sized parish and we will be needing to look at how best to staff our ministry into the future. We have a great congregation and let's keep on growing together in the Lord!

May the Lord bless you and keep you!  
Pastor Mark

---

### Fall Sunday Schedule and Covid Protocols

Our church council decided at it's August meeting that, beginning on September 12 (Rally Sunday), we will gradually ramp up our Sunday morning schedule with one service at 8:00 a.m., followed by Sunday School at 9:15 a.m. (*Starting September 11 we will also have a Saturday evening service at 6:00 p.m.*) The idea is to see how attendance is on Sunday mornings before possibly adding a second service at 10:30.

The council also decided that we would be coordinating with the school in following Covid protocols. They thought it was a good idea to have a consistent approach for families with the school and the church. Stay tuned!

---

**The Youth Gathering** is July 24th - 28th, 2022 in Minneapolis. It is for youth going into 8th-12th grade this fall.

Registration for the gathering will be on Sunday October 3 at 7:00 pm.



### Volunteers Needed for the 2022 ELCA Youth Gathering

The ELCA is looking for local volunteers to service in a wide variety of roles during the ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis from July 24-28, 2022.

There are jobs for people of all ages, abilities, and schedules. Volunteers will help serve as hotel hospitality, checking the participants in and being their Gathering point person at their assigned hotel. Applications for local volunteers are currently open and will close when we have reach capacity.

#### Key details about local volunteers:

- Volunteers must be at least 19 years old or out of high school for one year by the time of the Gathering.
- The Gathering will provide local volunteers meals while serving.
- If contacted to serve as Hotel Hospitality, you'll be required to stay at your assigned hotel property from July 23-28, 2022 (provided by the Gathering),
- Local volunteers will have access to the evening Mass Gathering sessions and closing worship.

If you have any question regarding serving as a local volunteer, please contact:

Kari Osmek or Sue Megrund at [lv.elcayg@gmail.com](mailto:lv.elcayg@gmail.com) or

The Gathering office at [gathering@elca.org](mailto:gathering@elca.org).

Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes  
August 19, 2021

President Albert Koepp called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m.

**Present:**

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

**Opening Devotions:**

Council and Staff shared a group prayer.

**Approval of Minutes:**

Members of Council reviewed the minutes from the July 22, 2021 Council Meeting. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes from July. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the agenda for August 19, 2021.

**Pastor Mark's Report:**

Worship Schedules and Covid Protocols: The council discussed and decided at our August meeting to gradually ramp up our Sunday morning schedule with one service at 8:00 a.m., followed by Sunday School at 9:15 a.m. (*Starting September 11 we will also have a Saturday evening service at 6:00 p.m.*) The idea is to see how attendance is on Sunday mornings before possibly adding a second service at 10:30. The council also decided that we would coordinate with the school in following Covid protocols. We thought it was a good idea to have a consistent approach for families with school and church.

Communication and Coordination with all appropriate parties will be going out for the following upcoming Fall Activities:

Sunday School resumes on Rally Sunday, September 12, with the children being invited to their rooms for orientation and to meet their teacher. The worship service on this day will include a Backpack Blessing for the kids as they return to school, an acknowledgement and thanks to our Sunday School teachers and helpers, and a distribution of Sparkhouse Bible Story Books to 1st Graders and Lutheran Study Bibles to 5th Graders.

Connect and Confirmation parent and student orientation night is set for Wednesday, September 8, at 6:00 p.m. Schedules, policies, sign ups, etc. will be provided for everyone as we move into the coming year together. Leader planning meeting is August 18.

9th Graders will be meeting to make their Confirmation sashes, receive information about writing a faith statement, etc. on Sunday, October 3, at 5:00 p.m. I will be meeting with ninth graders on the next three Sunday mornings between services to review their faith statements with each one of them. Confirmation weekend is set for Saturday, October 30, for picture taking, rehearsal, brunch, gift giving and a speaker. Confirmation Sunday is October 31 at a special 10:30 a.m. worship service.

First Communion class for 5th graders will be on Sunday evening, September 26, at 5:00 p.m. First Communion Sunday for those who participate will be the following Sunday, October 3.

New Member Orientation is set for Sunday, October 3, at 1:00 p.m. New Member Welcome Sunday for those participate will be the following Sunday, October 10.

A Farewell Sunday for Bri Bergstrom will be hosted by the choir on August 15. The choir will be singing and there will be coffee and cake after the service in Bri's honor. She has served as Choir Director here at St. John for eight years and we wish her the best on her new adventures!

The Personnel Team has conducted annual staff reviews and will be continuing this month to provide summaries to the church council. The annual pastor's review is also done and will be processed by the council this month. The team continues to look to fill the positions of Treasurer and Choir Director and will submit candidates to the council for approval.

The Joshua Group's two day retreat "Now is the Time - Intentional Time to Reflect and Plan for Post Pandemic Ministry." led by Jim Weckworth and Kristin Wiersma, is tentatively planned for two Saturdays, four hours each, on September 18 and October 3. Other Southwest Conference churches are partnering with us. Learning from this event can provide a good springboard as St. John looks to move ahead with strategic planning for the future.

Pastoral acts and care continue throughout this time with baptisms, weddings, funerals, visitation, counseling, etc. Regular staff meetings, communication and coordination with volunteers and the congregation, preparation for regular and special events, etc. continues apace.

Personal care is important for me and I have not always been a good advocate for myself in this regard. As a solo pastor I continue to line up pulpit supply and on-call pastors when I am away. I also appreciate the council's support and understanding providing such opportunities to be away for refreshment and personal renewal.

### **Staff Reports:**

#### **Custodial:**

Curt reported the following activities:

- Fiber Optics work has concluded obtaining the promised rate of speed and alignment with the fire alarm system.
- The water softener has been replaced.

#### **Treasurer:**

Rae presented the monthly financial reports and answered questions from Council members. She also noted there has been no up-tick in giving since the letter from Sue Steinhagen was sent out with Year-to-Date Giving Statements.

#### **Transfers:**

No Transfers in or out this month.

#### **Ongoing Business:**

- A. A discussion was had on Workshop Retreat Planning. Pastor Mark outreached to community churches as well as other Southwest Conference churches, but no firm commitment was received.
- B. Strategic Planning - Tabled
- C. Policy on Building Use by Outside Groups - Council clarified that the school rooms/basement would also be open for use by members of the Congregation and external groups. Council will continue to follow guidelines set forth by the Minnesota Department of Health. Food must be served by a server(s). Please contact the church office to schedule your events.

#### **New Business:**

- A. The following staff reviews were conducted. A motion was made, seconded and carried to accept Curt and Pastor Mark's performance reviews as written.
  - Maintenance  
The annual review for St. John's Maintenance person, Curt Johnson, was conducted by Brenda Nyblom and Pastor Mark Johnson on July 21, 2021. A copy of the review was provided to all. Curt is doing exemplary work in his position.
  - Pastor  
The annual review for St. John's Pastor, Mark Johnson, was conducted by members of the Council on August 19, 2021. A copy of the review was provided to all. Mark is doing exemplary work in his position.
- B. A discussion was had on Worship Services. As part of the ramp up to fall activities, the 8:00 a.m. Sunday service will continue with Sunday School resuming at 9:15 beginning September 12th. Service options will be revisited as needed.
- C. A discussion was had on loan repayments to the Foundation Fund and Building Fund. Topic will be added as a standing agenda item.

#### **Ministry Team Updates:**

- A. Stewardship Committee - nothing new.
- B. Buildings and Grounds Committee - Will be reviewing Schoolhouse requests.
- C. Personnel Committee - Staff reviews and working on filling vacant positions- Treasurer and Adult Choir Director.

- D. Children's Ministry Team - Team met last week. All Sunday school teachers have been identified and have begun discussing Christmas activities.
- E. Small Group/Faith Formation Committee - A discussion was had on the opportunity for Confirmation students to participate with running the projector during Sunday service(s).
- F. Worship and Music Committee - nothing new.
- G. Technology and Communications Committee - Started to put together a T.V. cart for use in the entryway.

Motion was made, seconded, and carried to adjourn at 8:52 p.m. Meeting was adjourned followed by the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Anne Herrmann, Secretary

---



## September Children's Ministry Update

### SUNDAY SCHOOL REGISTRATION

We are excited to start another programming year at St. John! Please pray for our pastor, teachers, and leaders as a new program year begins. Also, please consider volunteering with the youth ministry of the church, we welcome and encourage ALL adults to share their time and talents with our youngest members. **If you have a child in fifth grade or older that can help in classrooms on Sundays**, please contact [youthsjlc@gmail.com](mailto:youthsjlc@gmail.com) if you are able to help.



Please complete the registration form by September 5th for planning purposes.

Scan the QR code or follow the link:

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSejkUdHr9I5-uQcoWVehes6ZUWBWaMmF5Sf\\_0teqsgHDIU7mg/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSejkUdHr9I5-uQcoWVehes6ZUWBWaMmF5Sf_0teqsgHDIU7mg/viewform)

### Important September Dates

**Sunday, September 12th** will kick off our programming year. There is a lot going on!

- **Backpack Blessing:** All school aged children from Pre-K to High School are encouraged to bring their backpacks to the 8:00 church service to receive a blessing for the school year.
- **Bible Sunday:** Children (1st grade, and 5th grade) will receive Bibles during the 8:00 service.
- **Rally Sunday** will be an orientation for PreK-4th grade students and parents in the church basement. **Please plan to stay with your child on this morning. You will meet their teacher then separate for a short over view of the school year.** Our first Sunday School class will be Sunday, September 19th from 9:15- 10:15am.

**Sunday, September 26th First Communion Instruction:** This evening class, at 5:00 is for 5th grade students and older who have not yet received the sacrament of communion.

**Wednesday, September 15th Confirmation/Connect orientation @6:00pm:** Confirmation is for 7th/8th grade students and Connect is for 5th/6th grade students

**Wednesday, September 22nd Confirmation Small Group Service Fellowship/First Connect class @6:00pm**

**Sunday, October 3rd (8:00) 1st Communion:** All those that attended the 1st Communion class shall receive their first communion at the 8:00 church service.

**Sunday, October 31st (10:30) 9th grade confirmation service:** More details to follow..

# September 2021

## September Happenings at St. John

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			6p Worship Service			
5 9p Worship Service	6 Office Closed Labor Day	7 11 Lutheran Home Service 1:30p Kingsway Service	8 12:30 Staff Meeting	9	10	11 6p Worship Service
12 <b>Rally and Bible Sunday</b> 8p Worship Service 9:15 Sunday School 9:30 Council Executive meeting	13	14	15 12:30 Staff Meeting 6p Connect/Confirmation Orientation	16 5:30p Personnel Committee Meeting 6:30p Church Council	17	18 6p Worship Service
19 8p Worship Service 9:15 Sunday School	20	21	22 12:30 Staff Meeting 5:30p Pizza 6p Connect/Confirmation 6:30p Adult Choir	23	24	25 6p Worship Service
26 8p Worship Service 9:15 Sunday School 5p First Communion Instruction Class	27	28 6:30p Cub Scout Meeting	29 12:30 All Staff Meeting 5:30p Pizza 6p Connect/Confirmation 6:30p Adult Choir	30		





# Financial Corner

## St. John Financial Results Seven Months Ending July 31, 2021 and July 31, 2020

<b>General Operating Fund</b>		<b>Year Over Year</b>
	<b>July 31, 2021</b>	<b>July 31, 2020</b>
	<b>Increase (Decrease)</b>	
Income *	\$ 181,750	\$ 194,469
Expenses:		
Personnel	(120,084)	(176,551)
Office	(9,411)	(12,437)
Property & Maintenance	(22,973)	(23,853)
Ministry	(7,373)	(14,260)
Other	(2,617)	(2,267)
Benevolence:		
Minneapolis Area Synod	(7,000)	(7,000)
Camp Onomis	(1,750)	(1,750)
Belle Plaine Fire Dept	(300)	-
World Hunger (2019)	-	(250)
Lutheran Social Services	(1,000)	(1,000)
Net Receipts / (Expenditures)	<u>\$ 3,242</u>	<u>\$ (44,899)</u>
Cash Balance at January 1 (excl. all loans)	\$ (82,735)	\$ (84,836)
Net Income / (Expenditures)	3,242	(44,899)
Misc. cash not affecting income	377	(236)
Paycheck Protection Loan (2020)	-	54,839
Loan from Building Fund (from 2018 - 2019)	44,500	44,500
Loan from St. John Foundation (from 2014-2016)	54,564	54,024
Cash Balance at July 31	<u>\$ 25,948</u>	<u>\$ 23,392</u>

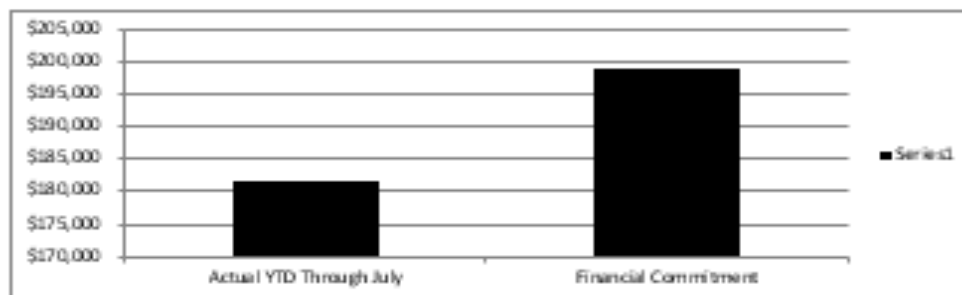
\* 41% of Contributions were received electronically in 2021 - thank you!

<b>Building Fund</b>		
Receipts **	\$ 62,448	\$ 57,469
Principal	(70,004)	(67,291)
Interest	(3,916)	(6,629)
(Loaned to)/Received from General Fund	-	10,000
Net Receipts / (Disbursements)	<u>\$ (11,472)</u>	<u>\$ (6,451)</u>
Loan Balance at January 1	\$ 208,857	\$ 325,224
Principal Payments	(70,004)	(67,291)
Loan Balance at July 31	<u>\$ 138,853</u>	<u>\$ 257,933</u>

\*\* 34% of Contributions were received electronically in 2021 - thank you!

Actual Income Compared to 2021 Financial Commitment:

Actual YTD Through July	\$ 181,750
Financial Commitment	\$ 198,865



September 5, 2021 Ushers	
9:00 Service	
<b>Myron Bratsch</b> Kirk Franck Matt Kes Jeff Eppen Brian Siekmann	<b>Arvin &amp; Midge Bessel</b> Lee Sauter Bob Fairbanks Greg Rosario Daron Anderson

September 12 and 19, 2021 Ushers	
8:00 Service	
<b>Terry Siemon</b> James & John Karl Dan & Wyatt Herrmann Tim Bristlin	<b>Dave &amp; Sara Bungarden</b> Louis Longhenry Ron & Dianne Rasmussen

September 26 and October 3, 2021 Ushers	
8:00 Service	
<b>Brian Schmidt</b> Jonathan Schmidt Jason Schmidt Doug Hillstrom Jerold Stauffacher Dave Latzke	<b>Tim Moonen</b> Dale Schmidt Samuel Schmidt Dick Bristow

## *In Memory*

Memorials were given to the General and Building Fund in memory of Bob Moody by Family and Friends.

CALLED TO SERVE THROUGH OUR GIVING	
Offering Received the week of	
<b>July 29- August 4</b> General Fund—\$7,085 Building Fund—\$2,150	<b>August 5-11</b> General Fund—\$7,463 Building Fund—\$1,974
<b>August 12-18</b> General Fund—\$5,714 Building Fund—\$1,100	<b>August 19-25</b> General Fund— \$4,395 Building Fund- \$1,021