

ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH MESSENGER

CALLED TO WORSHIP / COMMITTED TO SERVE / CONNECTED IN FAITH

April 2020

A monthly Publication of
St. John Lutheran Church

Worship Schedule

Has been postponed till at least **April 5**. Watch for updates to come.

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

Important Information

In cooperation with the Governor's directive to close non-essential services for the two week period from March 28 - April 11, our pastors and staff will stay at home during this time and our office will be closed. Our council is planning a virtual meeting on April 8 to determine where we are at that time. If the Governor's suspension is not extended, we plan to resume regular office hours on Monday, April 13.

We do not take these steps lightly. We understand they are taken in the best interest of our neighbors. For now, we remain Connected in Faith even though we are separated by social distance. We will continue to post updates, prayers, videos etc. on our Facebook Page, and are still available by e-mail or phone.



Our pastors are recording our Regular and Holy Week worship services. Please check our Facebook page or our website to view the services and to watch for updated information.

From Pastor Mark

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Grace and peace be unto you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The Lord Be With You...

We are living through challenging times. There is a lot of concern and anxiety as we are all taking unprecedented steps to try to slow down the spread of the coronavirus, compounded by the practical concerns of people being out of work and still needing to keep up with their responsibilities. Those on the margins who were already struggling are finding it even harder to provide for basic necessities. With the familiar routine of everyday life upended and with the isolation we are feeling in needing to be apart from each other, there is also the uncertainty about how long all of this will last.

Two things we can know for certain. One is that, as the old saying goes, "this, too, shall pass." It may be a bumpy ride for now, but we will come out of the other side of this. And, I suspect, perhaps with a new perspective on things we can normally take for granted, with a new appreciation for the gifts of faith and food and fellowship, with a renewed understanding that, through our forced isolation, we come to a deeper realization of how precious our connections are with each other.

We can also know with certainty that the Lord is with us. One of my favorite passages of Scripture is the end of the eighth chapter of Romans where the apostle Paul poses the question, "What then can separate us from the love of Christ?" And then Paul goes on to name some big separators: "Can tribulation or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or peril or the sword?" "No," Paul responds, "In all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." And then, in the last two verses, I love the way that Paul takes off and soars on the wings of poetry: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things that are present nor things that are yet to come, nor power, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all of creation will be able to separate us from the love that God has for us through Jesus Christ, our Lord."

When Paul writes about facing tribulation, persecution, famine, peril and the sword, he wasn't just making it up. He and the early Christian community faced some very hard and uncertain times. And yet, through it all, Paul sounds a note of confident triumph. Nothing, in all of creation, no uncertain time, no hardship, not even death itself can separate us from the love of God in Christ. And it is that love that holds us all, individually and as a family of faith, through the hard and uncertain places in life. So let's keep walking on in hope, looking up in faith, and reaching out in love.

Here at the Church our staff is working on...

Even though we are physically apart we are working on ways to stay connected and to be the church together through this time. These ideas will be evolving over time so watch for more details as they develop.

Worship is one way we can stay connected. Pastor Sarah has posted sermons for March 15 and 22 on our Facebook and Website. Click on and watch. Our March 29 worship service recording will expand to include all of the normal elements of our worship (minus the music) with such things as our Confession, Prayer of the Day, Readings, Sermon, Creed, Offering and Offertory Prayer (for this part, check out the ways we can continue to give without passing the offering plate), Holy Communion (you'll be asked to get a piece of bread and either wine or juice from your home to participate in this), Lord's Prayer, Community Prayers and Benediction. I'm guessing we will also have special music from time to time.

Our Sunday service will post each week on Sunday morning (9:00 a.m. on our Website and Facebook Page. Our local cable channel will show our March 29 service on Sunday at 9:00 a.m. We'd like to have our Sunday service back on local cable following the Governor's 2 week shutdown).

Also, please watch for our Holy Week services: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Easter. We will be recording them for viewing on our Website.

Connect and Confirmation students are encouraged to tune in and watch the service together with their families, if possible. After Lent, we will also be looking at ways to share lessons online. Our Children's Ministry Team will be posting on Saturdays ways to stay connected with ideas and resources to nurture our faith at home.

We are urging our members to stay connected in practical ways through this time, as well. Send a card. Make a phone call. Little personal touches make a big difference! Share on Facebook where you have seen God today, how you are living your faith through this time, how you are reaching out to others, etc. It will be good to continue to have an online meeting place to keep in touch and to hear each other's stories and reflections.

Ways we are continuing to be in Communication...

Our April Newsletter will not be going out through the mail but will be available to see on our Website. Also, please get used to looking at our Website and Facebook page for timely updates, information, devotions, prayers and other items. We will be updating our communication with you on a daily basis, so stay tuned. As I said, this is an evolving process and watch for further developments.

Ways we can continue to support our Church without passing the Offering Plate...

Even though we're not passing the plate, it is important that we all continue to provide regular and timely support for our congregation during this time. Fortunately, we have a number of ways of doing this. Please pick the one that most fits you. Offerings can continue to be made to St. John by:

***Dropping them off at the church office from 8:00 - 5:00**

Except during the Governor's 2 week stay at home closure from March 28 - April 11

***Mailing them to: St. John Lutheran, 148 S. Chestnut St., Belle Plaine MN 56011**

***Calling Vanco Client Services at 800-675-7430 - they will take your donation by phone**

***Via www.stjohnbelleplaine.org/serve/giving**

***Use the GivePlus App on your mobile phone**

***Text to Give using 855-957-2362**

Those with extra resources might consider giving a special gift during this time. Also, to avoid fraud, please do not respond to any other solicitations that are not listed above.

Prayer and Thanksgiving...

Pray! Even though we are physically separated, let us hold each other up in prayer. Let us pray for our church, our community and our world. Let us remember those with special need for prayer, those who are working in the front lines of the pandemic, our leaders that they make wise and prudent decisions, those who are suffering from illness, lay-offs, or uncertainty. And, very importantly, let us not forget to give thanks. It can become too easy to let our hearts and minds get weighed down by all of the negative things. But, amidst it all, there is always something for which to be thankful. A thankful heart, a heart that does not forget its blessings, is a strong heart.

Speaking of this, another of my favorite passages is Philippians 4:4-7, where the apostle Paul writes: "Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I will say, Rejoice! The Lord is near. Be anxious in nothing but in everything, by prayer and petition - 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." Did you know that Paul was in prison when he wrote this? Talk about living through a hard time of uncertainty. And yet, convinced that the Lord was with him even in that dark time, he was able to write such a passage of inspiration and hope. And, you'll notice, he didn't forget the part about "together with thanksgiving."

Stay Informed...

As we've seen, events can change rapidly. In accordance with the Governor's 2 week closure from March 28 - April 11, our office will be closed and our staff will be working from home. All activities are suspended through this time, as well.

If the Governor's two week closure is not extended, we expect to have our office open again with regular weekday hours on Monday, April 13. Our council will be meeting virtually on April 8 to make a decision about whether or not to continue suspension of our activities. We will keep you informed and updated on our Website and Facebook page.

So Stay Tuned...

And Finally...

At some point the "all clear" will sound and we will all be able to get back together! Even though we can watch T.V. and look at things on our computer, there is really no substitute for getting together for worship, fellowship, learning and service. It's only been a few days now and I miss seeing all of you! Someday, when this passes, I look forward to seeing and being with you. Absence makes the heart grow fonder and you are all being held tenderly in my thoughts and prayers. As the old hymn puts it, "God Be With You Till We Meet Again!"

From Pastor Sarah

CHANGE IN THE CHURCH

Not every situation is directly covered in the Bible. I used to joke with the Confirmation students that they couldn't find a Bible verse on smartphones or the internet. I kind of regret that now.

This is an unprecedented situation. While we've faced crisis before as a society, we really haven't had a situation of social distancing on a global scale--and this time we have the technology to remain connected and open while staying apart.

While there may not be a Bible verse that specifically mentions video conferences or live-streaming, there are stories--many stories--of people dealing with isolation, change, and the restoration of community. The consistent overall message is clear: God is love, and people belong--in society and in community--and should be cared for as part of that community.

In the last week, what community means has drastically shifted. Caring for people now means keeping a physical distance. Rev. Jacqui Lewis, PhD, said it very well on March 13:

It's scary to watch everything getting canceled--to see the streets of Broadway go dark. But, these are really signs of hope: People making tough and painful decisions to reduce viral transmission. Right now, love looks like an empty stadium.¹

That last sentence has been quoted again and again, and even paraphrased by some congregational leaders to say "Love looks like an empty church."²

Caring for people right now means social distancing, but it does not mean total disconnection. It means change. It means innovation and imagination about how we can stay connected and in community from a distance. It means breaking from the way we've always done things to adapt to a situation we haven't encountered before.

One thing that the church can do--and has done--is change. Maybe not with carpet color or Christmas ornaments, but change has happened. Books have been written about it. I've written articles about it. From a few apostles to a world-wide faith, from Nicea to the Reformation, the church has made drastic shifts. Here at St. John, I've been told several times about the history of the building, the additions, the new curriculums tried, the different worship bands and choirs, and so on.

We have a rich history that has prepared us for change, and we have a foundation in the Bible that talks about how we are to live life and care for each other— especially when that means change. There are many passages that talk about this, but I'll leave you with this one from Luke:

¹²The day was drawing to a close, and the twelve came to him and said, "Send the crowd away, so that they may go into the surrounding villages and countryside, to lodge and get provisions; for we are here in a deserted place." ¹³ But he said to them, "You give them something to eat." They said, "We have no more than five loaves and two fish-- unless we are to go and buy food for all these people." ¹⁴ For there were about five thousand men. And he said to his disciples, "Make them sit down in groups of about fifty each." ¹⁵ They did so and made them all sit down. ¹⁶ And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd. ¹⁷ And all ate and were filled. What was left over was gathered up, twelve baskets of broken pieces.³

We can imagine something other than the way things have always been done, and we have the tools to make that change— telephones, smartphones, the internet, the mail, etc. Scientists, governments, and healthcare providers are working to get us to a place where the social distancing can end. In the meantime, we are called to care for one another and find new ways to be the church in community.

¹Rev. Jacqui Lewis, PhD. Post on Twitter dated March 13, 2020. <https://twitter.com/revjacquilewis?lang=en>. Accessed March 24, 2020.

²Various memes and hashtags on online platforms and newsfeeds such as Facebook.

³Luke 9:12-17.

Unapproved St. John Lutheran Church Council Minutes March 19,
2020

President Matt Stier called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. in the gathering area to allow for social distancing.

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
X	Mya Holzemer	X	Sue Koenig	X	Chris Zellman	X	Chris Stier
	Bob Fairbanks						

Opening Devotions: Pastor Mark shared devotions

Approval of Minutes: Members of Council reviewed the minutes from the February 22, 2020 council meeting. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve the meeting minutes.

Pastor Mark's Report:

With the Covid-19 concerns about staying safe and supporting the health and well being of our neighbors, we have suspended activity at the church until April 5, with the council revisiting things on April 1 to decide what direction to take from there. Along with a brief posting on our Website a more informational letter has been mailed to all members.

Staff attended a Synod Video Conference on the Coronavirus and we are working on ways to be the church during this unusual time. We are brainstorming and game planning around worship, youth and family, ways of staying connected (albeit separately), stewardship, etc. We are in the developmental stage of this and will be trying some different things. We will be posting regular communications to our members online and, quite probably, through other mailings, as needed.

Strategic Planning: Per our past council discussions, phone calls have been made and interviews have been set up with consultants to come and meet with our church council and present on the value, process and price of a strategic planning process. The March meeting will feature a consultant from the Joshua Group and the April meeting we will get together with a consultant from the James Company.

Families Moving Forward is currently undergoing a process of restructuring our leadership on our local level. To date, this is fluid at this time and we will keep everyone posted as we reach more clarity.

The Personnel Committee has refined our background check process to ask that all volunteers in need of a check have their application done two weeks prior to contact with children.

Baptisms are either being rescheduled to a later date or done in a small, immediate family setting. Funerals are having immediate family cemetery committal services to be followed by a public gathering later when we are able to gather together.

Ongoing activities include working with staff on ways to continue to reach out and be the church at such an unusual time. Sermons and worship will continue online and, possibly, through our local cable channel. Communications to the congregation will also need to be continued on a regular basis.

Pastor Sarah's Report:

Online Ministry— Due to the concerns about COVID-19, gatherings and activities at St. John have been cancelled until at least April 5. In an effort to offer a connection to faith and community during this time, an online outreach has begun. The sermon originally prepared for March 15 was recorded and posted on St. John's Facebook page. Prayers, reflections, and other opportunities to engage from home are also being developed and posted.

Youth Ministry— The Mission Trip Fundraiser Dinner and Silent Auction was a success! Thank you to everyone who participated, donated items, and attended the event. Other fundraisers for this summer's trip to Vermont will resume when church activities do.

Connect and Confirmation— Lenten Dinners began on Ash Wednesday, February 26, and ran through Wednesday, March 11. Upon cancellation of worship services, every Connect and Confirmation student received three more Wor-

ship Note credits since there would be no way of knowing which students would have attended if worship had not been cancelled. Registrations for Confirmation Camp have been sent to Camp Onomia. Guidelines for an alternative project are being submitted for review and approval by Council for those students who are not able to attend.

Ongoing Items— Development of online resources such as video recordings and social media posts; writing sermons, posts, and newsletter articles; remaining up-to-date with developments in the news regarding the pandemic; council and staff meetings as needed.

Staff Report nothing new at this time

Treasurer. Rae presented the January financial reports for the General and Building fund and answered questions from the council. She also reviewed the summary of the Earl Stier bequest report.

Rae asked the council to read and review the foundation documents before the next meeting.

Transfers:

Transfers In:

Michael and Janet Campbell are transferring into our congregation from St. John's Lutheran in Shakopee.

Erin Carlson through affirmation of faith

Aimee and Ryan Cecka through affirmation of faith and their children Emmaleah and Easton

Heather and Ryan Creighton through affirmation of faith, their baby, Rosalie, was baptized March 8

Allison Hanek and Cole Sinnamon through affirmation of faith and their daughter, Isla

Mandy Posthumus through affirmation of faith and her children Henry, William and Maren

Trena Williamson is transferring in from Trinity Lutheran in Owatonna.

Transfers Out: none

Ongoing Business

Replacement for Amanda Schultz on council board has been found. Motion was made, seconded and carried to approve Jennifer Nagorski to the council. Matt will reach out to invite her to the next council meeting.

Strategic Planning for future mission and ministry - The council was scheduled to hear from Jim Weckworth representing the Joshua Group. This has been postponed until a later date.

Wild Game Feed - At St. John's scheduled for May 3, 2020 has been postponed until a later date

New Business

A. Camp Onamia Alternatives for students who do not attend - Pastor Sarah shared her draft description of the plan for students who are unable or can't attend the required Camp Onamia event. The council discussed and gave some ideas for changes to Pastor Sarah. She will revise and bring to the next meeting for a second reading.

B. Performance reviews - the council discussed and will bring to the personnel committee to discuss

C. Virtual Meetings - The council meeting scheduled for April 1st (to discuss the status of re-opening church building and services) will be held virtually - Angie will set up and invite.

Ministry Team Updates

1. Stewardship Committee - nothing new

2. Buildings and Grounds Committee - has not met, but Tim Moonen has given Curt the estimate for repairs of the parsonage. Motion was made, seconded and carried to make said repairs. Also, the 3 windows in the upper entryway will also be replaced soon.

3. Personnel Committee - will be meeting in 2 weeks to discuss updating background checks

4. Children's Ministry Committee - are brainstorming online/virtual options for conducting sunday school

5. Small Group/Faith Formation Committee - nothing new

6. Worship and Music Committee - nothing new, but also discussing online/virtual music

7. Technology and Communications Committee - nothing new

Festivals Committee - nothing new

Motion was made, seconded and carried to adjourn at 7:45pm. Meeting was adjourned followed by the Lord's prayer.

Respectfully Submitted,
Angie Kahle, Secretary

Children's Ministry Team Update!!!

While we aren't having in-person Sunday School, we are working to bring some video lessons and activities to you. Check out St. John's Facebook Page on Saturdays for the Children's Post of the Week.

Do you have internet but don't have Facebook?
You can still see everything we post on our website!
Just look in the lower right corner under "Church Updates"

www.stjohnbelleplaine.org

St. John Lutheran Church
in Belle Plaine, MN

About Worship Serve Connect Contact

*Together...
we are called to worship, committed to serve,
and connected in faith*

Welcome to St. John Lutheran Church!

As followers of our Savior, Jesus Christ, our mission is to love and care for one another— including you. It's the reason we gather every week. Whether you are just visiting the area and seeking a welcoming place to worship or someone looking for a more permanent church home, we invite you to stop in to see what we're all about. As an intergenerational congregation with a highly active youth ministry,

Online Living

Church Updates

Called to Worship: Here is this week's sermon on Psalm 23.
3 days ago

Facebook posts and videos are here!

April 2020



Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1 Dominick Rosario	2 Derek Gruhn Travis Latour Katy Potter Deana Siekmann	3 Angela Koepp Melissa Seaver Bonnie Vinkemeier Andrew Weldon	4 Piper Potter Katelyn Schmidt
5 Lariana Ruud Riley Stier	6 Lile Adelmann Dynelle Kruggel Jesse Lutterman Ann Pederson April Stier	7	8 Lana Hanson Nathan Muehlenhardt Alexander Ruud Danika Schroeder	9 Jacquelyn Bauleke Will Steinhagen	10 Beth Beuch Cassie Fink Jake Mercado Colin Sammons	11 Vivian Herrmann Alex Hoff
12 Nicole Schultz	13 Teresa Bratsch LuAnn Dahn Peyton Schwichtenberg Kiya Williamson	14 Grayson Klaverkamp Robert Moody Tyler Moylan	15 Joseph Adelmann Allison Skuzacek	16 Anthony Kluver Emma Martin Cody Schultz	17 Brooke Hagen Matthew Kes William Schultz	18 Elizabeth Hilgers
19 Sophia Petersen Sabrina Sammons	20 Judy Brown Sally Simcox	21 Amando Jo Rosario Mark Simcox Bruce Volek	22	23 Armin Dahn Sandra Schultz Bonnie Tronnes	24 Hunter Hornaman Larry Ruehling Jase Sanoye	25 Jackson Korbel
26 Christopher Hiles Diane Latour Jamie Lindahl Christopher Stier Samantha Tharaldson	27 Andrea Andert	28 Kade Skelley	29 Isabella Koepp Nikolai Kortgaard-Moorleghen Dominica Wolf	30 Jennifer Fairbanks Colt Henke Bailey Kes		

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

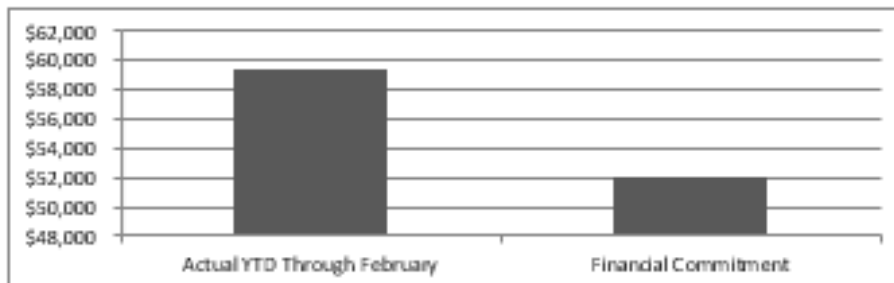
**St. John Financial Results
Two Months Ending February 29, 2020 and February 28, 2019**

Operating Fund			Year Over Year Increase (Decrease)
	February 29, 2020	February 28, 2019	
Income	\$ 59,443	\$ 48,349	23%
Expenses:			
Personnel	(52,869)	(48,778)	
Office	(3,370)	(3,819)	
Property & Maintenance	(6,581)	(6,841)	
Ministry Teams	(2,286)	(1,829)	
Other	(1,132)	(695)	
Benevolence:			
Minneapolis Area Synod	(2,000)	(2,000)	
Camp Onomia	(500)	(500)	
World Hunger (for 2019)	(250)	-	
Net Receipts / (Expenditures)	<u>\$ (9,545)</u>	<u>\$ (16,113)</u>	
Cash Balance at January 1 (Excl. Loans)	\$ (84,836)	\$ (64,346)	
Net Income / (Expenditures)	(9,545)	(16,113)	
Misc. cash not affecting income	(195)	(280)	
Loan from Building Fund (2018 & 2019)	54,500	35,000	
Loan from St. John Foundation (2014-2016)	53,754	53,264	
Cash Balance at end of February	<u>\$ 13,678</u>	<u>\$ 7,525</u>	

Building Fund			
	February 29, 2020	February 28, 2019	
Receipts	\$ 18,686	\$ 17,717	5%
Principal	(18,981)	(18,029)	
Interest	(2,139)	(3,091)	
Net Receipts / (Disbursements)	<u>\$ (2,434)</u>	<u>\$ (3,403)</u>	
Loan Balance at January 1	\$ 325,224	\$ 435,544	
Principal Payments	(18,981)	(18,029)	
Loan Balance at end of February	<u>\$ 306,243</u>	<u>\$ 417,515</u>	

Actual Income Compared to 2019 Financial Commitment:

Actual YTD Through February	\$ 59,443
Financial Commitment	\$ 52,005



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

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