

St. John's News

July, 2020



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Pastor: Cell 320-336-8149

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St. John's Webpage:

www.stjohnsaustincms.org

Live Radio Broadcasts of Worship services every Sunday, 9:00 a.m. at KAUS AM 1480

Watch the service live on line by going to

www.stjohnsaustincms.org



THE MISSION OF ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Through Jesus Christ, we

proclaim God's Word,

encourage one another in faith,

witness to God's love and

serve all people.

Message from Pastor James

The Church is dying in America.

Back in February I wrote a newsletter article (that appeared in the March newsletter) about "change" and why our church needs to change. Shortly after writing that article things changed! The last months have drastically changed the mission landscape and the Church's ability to operate. The churches are more empty now than they were a few months ago (when they weren't all that full.) As I'll point out further below the Church in America is dying. We may not like to hear that, or want to hear that, but it is true.

Youth are leaving church by the droves and they're not coming back. The church most of us knew, with packed pews and chairs in the aisle, has all but evaporated. In our lifetime we have watched our nation move from a nation proud of its Christian heritage to a nation that, in many places, is trying to cleanse true Christianity from itself. What are the faithful to do? How can we remain true to the truths of Scripture and our Confessions and grow? Some would say we can't. Some would say don't try. Some want the church to last just long enough to get to their funeral.

That is not the answer. Jesus said, "I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell shall not prevail against it." [Matthew 16:19]. The answer is get back to the basics. We have the Light. We live in a world of darkness. Shine the Light!

Over the next several months my newsletter articles are going to cover where our church needs to go, why we need to get there, and how we can get there. It will include "change."

Most studies project that by 2030 the Christian affect in the United States will be almost nonexistent.

Studies (even really good ones) predict the historic denominations in America will be a whisper of what they once were. Congregations, by the droves, will close. Many more will simply be insignificant shadows of what they once were. The Christian affect on society by the people of God will be almost nothing. That is not a happy outlook.

Will there be congregations that defy that reality? Sure, but the truth remains by 2030 there won't be much left of what we have known. Ask any conscientious congregational leader and they'll tell you they feel the burden in many and varied ways. Congregations feel it too, which is why they ask, "why?" Why can't:

- a bit more work...
- a bit more programming...
- a bit better preaching...

... take us back to the glory days we once knew. We'd like to believe those things will help. We'd like to believe that will work. It can't. It won't. That is a reality we must accept. This COVID epidemic has only accelerated the predictions of a dying Church.

Look in any metropolitan area in the U.S., churches are almost gone. (I can tell you the pastor-champions, that are working there, often feel undervalued or forgotten by the rest of the Church.) Count the number of people under 50 in this more most any congregation on any given Sunday. You only need to open your eyes to see a church that is slowly dying away. Look back at what's been happening and how fast it has been happening. Remember when we used to set up chairs for extra seating? Now look to the future and you arrive at a "not much left" 2030 landscape.

We need to accept the harsh reality of losing what we've loved, and then start to imagine what God might be planning to do next. We must begin to pray for the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, to blow, create, empower and guide us into what comes next, for us, for His Church, and for those people who still live in darkness.

Our current view, our current vantage point, looks more like the children of Israel before they entered Promised Land. We look into that place and we see:

- Giants.
- Jericho walls.
- Ominous obstacles.

We'd rather turn back in fear, hid behind our walls of comfort, and let the world fall to Satan. Are these problems too big for the God? This is the Lord God of Armies who...

- Brought them out of Egypt with a mighty hand and outstretched arm.
- Parted the Red Sea.
- Provided for them in the wilderness.

We need to be willing to take risks.

We must be willing to try new things, knowing that some, perhaps many, of those new things will fail. We are in uncharted territory. We are heading into a place where the tools and talents upon which we depended in the past are the cause of problems for the future. We need new tools, new talents, and new ideas. The challenge in front of us is more difficult than we've imagined, and our congregation is not going to arrive at a better future unless we discover together how to change.

What will change? Let's answer that by stating first what will not change:

- God's Holy, inspired, inerrant, sacred Word, and all that it teaches will not change while I am the pastor here.
- The "Symbols of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod." The Book of Concord, the truths contained in the three ecumenical (*universally accepted*) creeds, and the small and large catechism will not change while I am the pastor here.
- The Sacraments (*sacred acts*) given to the Church by Jesus Christ will not change while I am the pastor here.

As your pastor this is my first priority. This is the mantel placed on my shoulders. Your souls and what is taught in this church are on me. God's Word makes it clear I will answer for it. The message of salvation for all people must be clearly and consistently proclaimed. It is my intention for St. John's to be the brightest beacon of the Way, the Truth, and the Light in this city.

To do that, and be that, we cannot sit helplessly on our hands as victims, hoping the church lasts long enough to get to our funeral. We must have a mind and heart for the generations to come. We must have a heart and mind that is willing to sacrifice anything and everything except the Word, the Symbols and the Sacraments to bring that Truth to anyone and everyone who will hear it.

The Mission is not counting people who need to hear. It is counted in people who have heard.

The mission opportunity will no longer be measured by the numbers needing to be reached. The mission opportunity going forward is measured by the number of baptized people of God taught and trained to walk into the mission field. That is utterly opposite of what you have been conditioned to think.

What brought us here, through the decades past, has trained us to think in ways that can do nothing but fail in the future. We now go out into a culture that no longer values going to church as a good thing. People will not come just because we mention Jesus here. The culture outside our church walls is uncaring, and often hostile, toward the Church, the Church's message, and the Church's Savior.

Our goal is from this time forward to change that perception. We will change it by the way we act, the way we run this church, and the way we reach out to help people who need help. Our view needs to change from staring at empty pews to looking for people to fill them. To fill them not for their money, or to plug them into boards, or to do anything beyond hearing the Gospel. Good works will flow from a faithful heart.

These people may be from families that have never walked into a church, never opened a Bible or even have one in their house. They are truly walking in Darkness. They are why we are here! They are the ones Jesus came to save. We, the people of St. John's, are here for such a time as this.

What is my near-future view for St. John's? Some of that can already be seen. The changes in worship services is part of that. Change must come. In fact it already has. It has come and gone and left us far far behind. It is time to get up and get started on a new venture. It is God's adventure for us.

Changes in worship Services

First, I know, and am very sensitive to, the deep love some have for our Lutheran tradition and "old-school" liturgical worship. I deeply respect that and I have no intention to take that away from you. Others would prefer a services that can experiment, try new things and explore other ways to worship our Lord and Savior. I'd like to give that to you. Obviously we cannot do both at the same time.

The extra services serve multiple purposes. They provide for extra social distancing. They provide alternative forms and style of worship, they open up opportunities to share the message of hope and salvation with others.

I am proposing worship service times will need to change, probably for everyone. Everyone gives up just a little and everyone gets more of what they want. I want these services to be the place you personally would want to invite your friends.

Through the discussions I've had so far we have some proposals. The elders and I would like to hear more feed back from the congregation concerning how we can best serve the congregation, and its work to bring Jesus to all people.

Option #1:

Sun.	8:00-9:00 Traditional
	9:15-10:15 Education hour
	10:30-11:30 Praise
Wed.	6:30pm Traditional

Option #2:

Sun	9:00-10:00 Traditional
	10:30-11:30 Praise
	11:45-12:30 Education hour (or Sunday early evening)
Wed.	6:30pm Traditional

Option #3:

Sun	9:00-10:00 Traditional
	10:15-11:00 Education hour
	11:15-12:15 Praise
Wed.	6:30pm Traditional

These are three options. There may be other ideas. The elders and I are open to suggestions, again the goal is to determine how we can best serve the congregation, and the community around, us with extra worship services. We'd like to have some decisions in place by the voters' meeting at the end of July.

This is our new stating point.

This is where we are now. We are here to run the good race. My future articles will continue to define and explain these things and explore how we can be a growing church. I plan to start a Bible study to explore these things in the near future. I'm look at technologies that will easily bring that to those who are not able to be physically present. May God bless us as we embark on this journey.

God's peace to you,

Pastor James.

Pastor James Office Hours	
Monday	9-11:30 a.m.
Wednesday	9-11:30 a.m.
Thursday	9-11:30 a.m.

On Tuesday Pastor James is working at home but can be reached by phone: 320-336-8149

July Birthdays for Shut-Ins

15 Joyce Bakke
31 Roxanne nelson



Our shut-ins would appreciate a card, phone call or visit

DURING THE MONTH. A LIST OF ALL THE SHUT-INS IS ON THE BULLETIN BOARDS

Ruby's Pantry in Austin

Grace Lutheran Church 2001 6th Avenue SE Austin, MN 55912

3rd Thursday of the Month Doors open at 4:00 pm Distribution 5:00-6:30 pm

If you are interested in learning more about Ruby's Pantry or volunteering at a Pantry, please contact them.
651-674-0009

goodnews@rubyspantry.org www.rubyspantry.org

Youth Fundraiser

Youth and Family is having a Fundraiser to help the youth get to the National Youth Gathering in Houston, Texas. We are planning on having a rummage sale this fall. If you would like to donate larger items and have only Partial or ALL of the proceeds to go toward the youth fundraiser, that is an option. So start going through your stuff and save it for the rummage sale. There is a place to store your donated items at the church. Contact the church office for more information.

TAKE IT TO THE LORD IN PRAYER. DO YOU HAVE A PRAYER CONCERN OR THANKSGIVING? COMMEND IT TO THE LORD THROUGH YOUR OWN PRAYERS, BUT ALSO THROUGH THE LOVING SERVICE OF OUR PRAYER CHAIN. IF YOU HAVE AN ITEM YOU WOULD LIKE INCLUDED ON THE PRAYER CHAIN, PLEASE CONTACT MIRIAM LUEHMANN AT 437-7619 OR Miriam.Luehmann@icloud.com

Radio Broadcast

Fellow Members of St. Johns,

We would like to thank everyone for supporting St. Johns Radio Broadcast. The sponsors for the upcoming weeks are as follows.

June 28, 2020 Sponsored by Pastor and Donna Bailey *in honor of all our heroes who helped so much during this 2020 pandemic.*

July 5, 2020 In memory of Deb Schammel sponsored by her Grandsons Ethan, Jacob, Liam, William and family.

July 12, 2020 Sponsored by Ken and Winnie Greenlee in thankfulness to God for Winnie's May birthday.

July 19, 2020 Sponsored by Randy and Doraine Graff in thankfulness to God for their Children and grandchild, Amber, Jesse and Henry Collins and Nathan Graff

July 26, 2020 Sponsored by an anonymous listener in thankfulness to God for the radio broadcast.

You can listen to the radio broadcast live on KAUS Radio Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m.

God's blessing to all of you, Clayton and Ellen Petersen

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

Pastor John and Carol Schleicher have too few words to thank you for your loving friendship and care over the last years, when we lived in our dear home—Austin, and worshipped at our “forever home-church”—St. John's. The wonderful drive-by parade of cars, special people, and cards/ gifts we received, was a perfect send-off for us on May 24! **THANK YOU SO MUCH**, Board of Social Ministry, especially; Church Council; Pastor James; and all of you friends who have wished us well, with virtual hugs, waves, and blessings. Leaving St. John's was perhaps the most difficult “congregation—departure” in our lives. God WAS with us in everything, and we praise Him for His faithfulness!

Tidbits of Our Move

Allied's BIG truck came to Courtyard on May 27. On May 29, we arrived in our Texas driveway to ALL of our grandchildren, our sons and gals--- all cheering with signs, and excited to give hugs. They had supper ready. It's been pretty overwhelming, and we have seen someone in our immediate family EVERY day since. Our adult-kids have helped with SO many things---appliance-purchasing, organizing our kitchen, attic-entry. We are getting calendars filled with Birthday Parties; returns to Sunday worship in the sanctuaries, WITH masks, in our two LCMS church options; Father's Day family meal for 17+ (not at our home); our oldest grandson's First Communion; and A LOT of childcare in three families. Grandpa taught the oldest “Cribbage,” and we taught three brothers “Chickenfoot Dominoes.” The family-times outweigh the frustrations of NEW: many Electric Companies to choose from, TRAFFIC, testing sometime for Texas Drivers' Licenses, TRAFFIC, address-changes, Direct TV replaced by “streamed everything,” TRAFFIC, prescription refills, and.....98 degrees last week. Never doubt that we miss you! We are thankful that we are as “young as we are,” to have made this move. Our hearts and home will welcome you, anytime. We hope to visit in Austin early this Fall, God-willing. God bless you!

July Birthdays

03 Dylan Caron
03 Doug Peterson
04 Gene Pfeifer
04 Connie Prantner
05 Adyson Wradislavsky
06 Allen McAlister
07 Courtney Kusick
09 Ken Greenlee
09 Thad Kusick
10 Bryer Kruse
11 Roger Anderson
13 Landon Wasko
13 Ashton Wasko
15 Joyce Bakke
17 Joel Jensen
20 Katie VanPelt
20 Abby VanPelt
20 Blake VanPelt
21 Adam Wradislavsky
22 Robert Schammel
24 Ron Shatek
27 Bonnie Brady
28 Tara Watkins
29 Kim Downey
31 Dianne Brandt
31 Nathan Downey
31 Roxanne Nelson

Anniversaries

06 Rick & Mary Nienow
24 David & Nicole Kramer

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

June 9, 2020

The June 9, 2020, meeting was called to order by President Vance Oelkers at 7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Pastor James, Vance Oelkers, Tim Carlson, Dave Watkins, David Ruhnke, Beth Saurer, Donna Bailey

OPENING PRAYER: Pastor Groleau

SECRETARY'S REPORT: M/S/P to accept the secretary's reports for March 10, April, and May, as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Net Operating Income: \$15,409.77. Net Decrease in Designated Assets: \$14,488.80. Net Income \$960.97. M/S/P to accept the Treasurer's report, as written.

ELDERS' REPORT:

We opened with a Bible Study

Discussed summer worship schedules: Sunday at 9 a.m. (Traditional) and 10:30 a.m. (Praise) and Wednesday at 6:30 p.m. (Traditional)

Discussed the loosening of restrictions on Worship as outlined by the State of Minnesota and Minnesota Dept of Health. Starting June 10, congregations are allowed to worship at up to 50% of capacity provided social distancing guidelines are followed.

Discussed possible schedules for worship following Labor Day to include 2 services and Sunday School/Bible Studies. We will be looking for input from the congregation about different schedules.

Reviewed Pastor's housing allowance compensation paid so far for 2020. Expenses are in line with the Budget for 2020. No adjustments will be made.

Closed with Prayers and the Lord's Prayer.

TRUSTEES' REPORT:

Now that Pastor and his family have completed the move to their new home, the parsonage is being offered for sale through a realtor. Trustee, Adam Meyer, is liaison between the realtor and the Board of Trustees. No listing details are known at this point.

Two defibrillators, purchased with money from the Ken and Sig Carlson estate, have been mounted, one by the East entrance and the other in Schleicher Hall near the kitchen door. Kara Grant will be seeking volunteers to watch a short training video so that there will be several people in any of our worship services who are able to operate a defibrillator.

Carpets will be cleaned this Friday, June 12th. Sanctuary seat cushions that have spots will also be cleaned.

An electronic controller that operates the AC chiller had to be replaced last week. The bill will be just under \$1,000 dollars for the part and installation labor.

BOARD OF EDUCATION:

No report

YOUTH & FAMILY BOARD:

No report

STEWARDSHIP BOARD:

Stan is distributing SCRIPT cards between 10:00 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. on Sunday mornings at the same location as prior to the shutdown. Virus precautions will be used.

The board also reminds the congregation again of the importance of keeping up the donations at levels at least as high as prior to the shutdown.

SOCIAL MINISTRY:

Pam and group are thinking about some way to celebrate when “back together” occurs.

Sumner back pack donations are not being used because other resources are funding the project. Our problem is we can't use these donations for a meaningful project unless we can get the permission of the people who donated to this fund.

EVANGELISM:

No report

PASTOR'S REPORT:

See Pastor's Report directly following the Council minutes.

OLD/NEW BUSINESS:

Since the COVID-19 pandemic cancelled a May Voters meeting, M/S/P to have a short voters meeting in the sanctuary (social distancing if necessary) on Sunday, July 26, at 10:00 a.m. (in between services). A voters meeting is necessary to vote for church officers and new board members. They will be installed during the services on August 2.

ADJOURNMENT: M/S/P to adjourn @ 8:00 p.m.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Respectfully submitted: Donna Bailey, Council Secretary

Special Congregational Voters Meeting

Sunday, July 26, 2020

About 10:00 a.m. (in between 1st and 2nd services)

This will be a short meeting. A voters meeting is necessary to vote for church officers and new board members.

They will be installed during the services on August 2.

St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912

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July, 2020

NEWSLETTER



ST. JOHN'S NEWS

Return Service Requested

