

St. John's News

January, 2021



Church: 507-433-2642

Pastor: Cell 320-336-8149

Church Office:

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Pastor James Groleau:

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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

Today there are over 44.5 million foreign-born residents in the U.S. That is 14% of the population, and the largest percentage of the population since 1910. These are the first generation immigrant and refugees living among us. Some are here because they got in line and their turn came up. Some are here because if they stayed home they'd be killed. Some for political reasons. Some for natural disaster reasons. Some simply because they confess with us their faith in the one, true, living, holy, eternal, triune God. The only God who saves. Some of them would rather go back home, but their home is gone and they are here trying to figure out how to live.

What is the Church to do? Meet them. Listen to them. Affirm them. Learn from them. Acquaint them with our new context and culture. Connect them to a place with resources, partnerships, education and training. That is the Church. Everyone needs Jesus. Especially those who are new to our land. We are all strangers in a strange land. We are not home yet. This is not the place where we belong. Heaven is our home. Some among us just show the sojourner status a bit more clearly. The Church must be about bringing Jesus to all people, because all people should be recognized as critical partners in what God is doing among us.

This can feel incredibly difficult for some. Congregations can often feel a sense of loss when groups of a different culture or cultures arrive and change the look and feel of neighborhoods. It can be difficult to not take a "fortress mentality" toward those "outsiders." Congregations can feel helpless and out of control. Language, customs, traditions and

practices make it difficult to build bridges, relationships, and friendships.

For those "outsiders" it is difficult too. They've got to learn a new language, a new culture, find ways to get food that is all new, and new kinds of cloths. Here in Austin all of that comes with their first Minnesota Winter which for many is a special kind of culture shock.

Compounded that with congregations struggling to survive in their ever changing neighborhoods. In church there is reduced attendance, giving, and volunteering, and a feeling of fear peering into a perceived bleak future. There is a struggling with not knowing what to do, as we feel like foreigners in our own hometown. Here in Austin that is more true than many places in the country. Austin is flooded with so many language, cultures, traditions and practices that are new to those who have lived here all their lives.

That problem exists for those new in town too. The Christians want to worship the same way they always have. In the same language, with the same music, the same liturgy and style. For them all of that is gone. For us we can feel like it's something we're losing. These things can escalate feelings that might cause us to hunker down. Make church a bunker, where we hide from the world and keep our stuff safe. The problem with that is Jesus. The problem is the Church was never meant to be private, exclusionary, or exclusive. We all know the fix, we just don't know how to get to the fix.

Churches often employ a "come to our church" attitude, not recognizing that what they really mean is come do things the way we always have; not recognizing the invitation had tied to it an expectation to leave behind

everything they loved about their church.

All of this lends itself to a struggle between faithful Christian people. Even those who both confess and profess the same faith and doctrines. The very things that should bring us together are torn apart. Not knowing what else to do, churches continue to struggle, shrink and suffer.

The United States is, right now, the 3rd largest mission field in the world. Austin, MN is on the leading edge of that, in many ways, simply because of the many people who come here to do work that many folks wouldn't be willing to do. It has brought the Mission Field of God right to our door step. Jesus said, "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." [Matthew 9:37-38] His harvest is here.

There are two major fronts in reaching people for Christ. There are the 44.5 million foreign-born American residents. There is also their 74.3 million 2nd generation English-speaking American children, who are very different than their parents, in language, culture, tradition and practice. These kids have become foreigners to their parents in their own home. It is profoundly imperative to recognize both mission fields, and the needs of both which are very different.

What is the Church to do?

The first steps are for churches to stop wringing their hands, and developed three simple practices:

- **Prayer.** The Church, the pastors, and the people pray. They pray earnestly for the Lord to send out more laborers in the harvest field, asking God for eyes to see what we can each do personally as we walk out into that field. A field that we walk into every time we leave the church, or every time we walk out the door of our house.
- **Prioritize relational discipleship.** The Baptized people of God entering the amazing adventure, (maybe with a little trepidation) of giving birth to a vibrant, growing, pew filling future. We need a Missionary Movement within the Church. One that brings Jesus to people through relationship and friendships. It is through these tools that stable and sound confession and doctrine are conveyed.
- **Accept loss.** This is DIFFICULT! This path will require change. We have to change, and they have to change. What we find in the middle is an unchanging doctrine and unchanging Scriptures confessed in a changing way. Accepting and adjusting "the way we've always done things" to the new Missionary Movement mentality that puts souls before stuff.

This is not easy for us who've always lived here. This is in no way easy for foreign-born pastors and missionaries either! They often had to leave and give up the status, position and resources they had where they came from, to shepherd their people here. They often feel like second class citizens in the larger American church. They often feel undervalued and isolated as Baptized missionary minded partners.

What is the Church to do?

"Go and make disciples..." *Jesus*

How does St. John's do that?

First, what will not change?

Holy Sacred Inerrant Scripture will not change. Our doctrine and confessions will not change. They are never in the way. They are the way. For as long as necessary and desired we must keep a traditional worship service and style for those who have lived their whole life with it, and find security, peace and comfort in it. A love for the only God who saves must also never change.

What can change?

The methods and styles of conveying those unchanging and unchangeable truths will change. The way we greet people and accept people into our congregation should change. Expectations of membership will change and be redefined. The way people are invited must change.

It all comes down to discipleship and what that means. It starts with being friendly, understanding and patient. It requires offenses to be seen as simple misunderstandings that can be overcome with conversation. It requires some formal, and some casual, discussions about what needs to be done to maintain the building and grounds, and who will do it. It requires a congregation to act like a family. A family that is ever growing with new people. People who need the Holy Word of God, Holy Baptism, and Holy Communion with the only God who saves.

Throughout this newsletter series we've explored a lot of statistics and anthropological studies (studying people) to explore how to grow a church. Although mentioned in passing there is one final ingredient which must be present. Without it there is no church. It is more important than all others. Without it the best one can achieve is to start a religious

club. No matter how large the gathering might become, no matter how faithful they may try to be to the Bible, without this one thing, the Church will not grow. I have told you the pastor is essentially irrelevant. That is mostly true. People will join a church if they like the people and what the church has to offer them. That is still a club, not a church.

Martin Luther explained the marks of the Church are, (or a church is a church when) seven things are present:

(These are shortened and paraphrased. For more information see: Martin Luther on The Marks of the Church.)

- 1) **The Word** – Holy Christian people are recognized by their possession of the Holy Word of God. Holding it to be pure, inerrant, authoritative, and holy.
- 2) **Holy Baptism** – God’s people are recognized by the holy sacrament of Baptism, wherever it is taught, believed, and administered correctly in accordance with Jesus’ command and instruction.
- 3) **The Lord’s Supper** – God’s people are recognized by the holy Sacrament of the Altar, wherever it is rightly administered, believed, and received, in accordance with Jesus’ command and instruction.
- 4) **Discipline** – God’s people are recognized by the Office of the Keys exercised publicly. Where repentance is present forgiveness must be provided. Where unrepentance is present sins are not forgiven, but retained.
- 5) **Biblical Offices** – The Church is recognized by the fact that it calls pastors to teach the Word of God, administer the sacraments, and administer the Office of the Keys.
- 6) **Worship** – holy Christian people are recognized by diligence and dedication to prayer, public praise, and thanksgiving to God.
- 7) **Suffering** – holy Christian people are recognized by the possession of the sacred cross, and an endurance through trial and struggle while maintaining Christian integrity.

Luther wrote, “These are the true seven principal parts of the great holy possession whereby **the Holy Spirit** effects in us a daily sanctification (*making holy*) and vivification (*giving life*) in Christ, according to the first table of Moses (*Commandments 1-4*). By this we obey, albeit never as perfectly as Christ, but we constantly strive to attain the goal, under His redemption and remission of sin, until we too shall one day become perfectly holy and no longer stand in need of forgiveness.”

What makes a church grow? The Holy Spirit. It is not the people. It is not the pastor. It is not the liturgy. It is not the music. It is God. It is faithfully following His direction and instruction. The openness, the friendliness, the tolerance, the welcome-ness are all important, but they are not what grows the church. Following Jesus does. Relationships, in our culture, are the vehicle through which the Gospel is proclaimed and the Church spreads and is grown.

The end of COVID is now in sight. Normal will return. It will be some months yet, but the end of this plague will come. When it does, churches will be smaller. The need to reach out with the Gospel will be even more important. That task will require each and every one of us to do our part. To learn what to do, Follow Jesus.

I would encourage you to take some time, through these cold months, to read through all four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. As you do focus on how Jesus treated people. How did He treat those who were unrepentant? How did He treat those who were? How did He treat outsiders (Romans, Samaritans, prostitutes, tax collectors, etc.)? Who are the outsiders in Austin? How would Jesus treat them? He is our primary example. It is His Church. He told us to spread the message. His Church serves others. Follow Jesus.

This Christmas give the gift of the Gospel. Start praying now. Pray for St. John’s. Pray for the people whom we will soon reach. Pray for yourself, that God would give you the heart, mind and sight to see the ready harvest, and carry that harvest of souls home in the ark of the Church. Pray for the relationships and words that will be use by the Holy Spirit to call people to repentance and faith. It is when we rely on God’s Word, God’s action, and God’s plan that the Church gathers souls. Follow Jesus.

God’s blessings and peace,

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

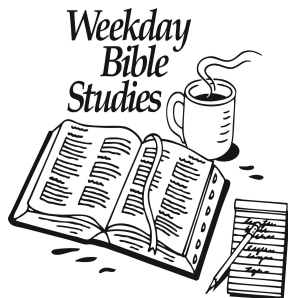
Ruby's Pantry in Austin

As we transition from summer into fall our Ruby's distributions continue at the Mower County Fairgrounds the 3rd Thursday of each month. With concerns about how many people we can safely have in our church building it's possible we may be at the fairgrounds for a few more months. There has been a noticeable drop off in volunteers for June and July so we are asking our area churches for any help they can give us in soliciting volunteers. If you have any individuals or groups who may be willing to help please have them call Grace Lutheran Church at 433-3445. As always, you are invited to stop out during any of our distributions to see the work we are doing in Christ's name to help our neighbors. Thank you for considering helping and please continue to pray our efforts will reach those who need it most.

goodnews@rubyspantry.org www.rubyspantry.org

Bob Rosel, Media Coordinator Ruby's Pantry Austin

Together in the Word



Sunday: Adult Bible class at 10:00 a.m. led by Pastor James
Total Forgiveness at 10:00 led by Thad Kusick, Elder

Tuesday: Women's Bible study meets at 1:00 p.m. at St. John's.

Wednesday: Gray Matters meets St. John's at 7:30 p.m. Join us for a free-flowing discussion.

Thursday: *Crossways* at 10:00 a.m. Study the entire Bible in two years. Led by Sandy Groleau, LCMS Director of Church Ministries. New members always welcome.

Men's Bible study at 5:00 p.m. - led by Dave Ruhnke.

Shoe Away Hunger



Shoe Away Hunger If you have gently used shoes you no longer need, consider placing them in the box near the office. One pair of shoes can supply a family with seven days of essential groceries. Damaged shoes can no longer be accepted.

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

Dear fellow Members of St. Johns,

We would like to thank everyone for supporting the Radio Broadcast. The broadcast is an important outreach to our community in normal circumstances! During this time of a health crisis in our country it is even more important to continue supporting St. Johns Radio Broadcast to reach those folks who are shut-in or can't get out to worship. We are thankful to be able to continue this ministry because of your continued support. If you would like to make a donation to St. John's Radio Broadcast you can mail your donation to St. John's or to my home, Ellen Petersen 2805 5th AVE SW, Austin, MN 55912. The weekly fee is \$150.00 you can donate the total amount or any part of the amount. Starting January 24, 2021, we have many broadcasts in the following weeks after that without sponsors. Please prayerfully consider sponsoring a radio broadcast.

Jan. 3, 2021 Sponsored by John and Carol Schleicher with thanks to our Savior-God for His blessing throughout their 50 years of marriage which began with their wedding in St. John's sanctuary on Dec. 26, 1970.

Jan. 10, 2021 Sponsored by Dave and Sandy Grant in thankfulness to God for their family and friends

Jan. 17, 2021 Sponsored by Dave and Sharry Watkins thanking God for 50 years of marriage, Sharry & I have been so blessed with all our children and grandchildren and our **special** church family here at St John's.

Jan. 24, 2021 Open

Jan. 31, 2021 Open

You can listen to the radio broadcast live on KAUS Radio Sunday mornings at 9:00 a.m. We are anxious and look forward to worshipping together again with our whole St. John's family.

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

January Birthdays for Shut-Ins

23 Pam Waters



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

LWML NEWS



It is a new year, I certainly hope for a better year than last year. The Altar committee did a great job of ordering the poinsettias this year and for everyone that purchased one. Thank you so much, without the support of the congregation this endeavor wouldn't happen. Also, thank you social ministry for helping the committee for delivering them to the shut-ins. The spring rally is being planned for April 17, 2021, let us hope we can gather in person and not on zoom. January will be a quiet month, but don't forget the mites. We are enclosing the mite goal so you all can see how the mites are used and how much is needed.

God Bless, Francine Strouf

THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU

Youth Rummage Sale ---

Thank you to members of the congregation for donating items for the Youth Rummage Sale in October. This congregation has always been and continues to be very supportive of our youth. Items that remained after the rummage sale were donated to the Epilepsy Foundation, Rachel's Hope, Salvation Army and the ARC program in the Cities. Special thanks to the FROGS for delivering donations to the Salvation Army and to Sherri Watkins for delivering donations to the ARC program in the Cities.

Formal Church Key Policy – Due to new insurance company requirements a new formal key policy has been established that will involve locks on the outside doors being re-keyed, so a new, different key will be required to enter the church building. Many of you will need a new key to conduct your specific ministry(ies) here at St. John's. Please be discerning about your need for a key, but if you do need a key you may request one by putting your name on the sign-up sheets at either the east and west bulletin board. The sheets will stay up through January 10th. If you aren't able to sign yourself call the church office to have your name included. The locks will not be changed until new keys have been distributed. Once the new keys are made you will be notified and they will be distributed and signed-out for in person at the church office, 9-12 am Monday through Thursday or Sunday mornings between services. If you have an old key, they will still work on locks inside the building, so you may keep it if you need it. If you don't need old keys please return them to the church office.

The purpose of the key policy is not to restrict or make it more difficult to carry out active ministry or to frustrate active workers in the church but to ensure safety and reduce risk of loss due to theft and vandalism. With a large number of current keys in circulation it is probably not a bad thing that we are doing this at this time. Thank you for your cooperation. Board of Trustees.

Social Ministry

Social Ministry has worked closely with Sumner School to help with student needs. Since the Coat Drive at St. John's was canceled this year it was recommended that we reached out to Sumner School to see if there were clothing requests we could help support. Sumner staff put together a wish list of clothing and other items they had for students. Social Ministry went shopping and was able to purchase ALL the items on their list. Items purchased included long sleeve t-shirts, sweatshirts, pants, underwear, socks, tennis shoes, snow boots, mittens, hats, detergent, and dish soap. They currently had a sufficient supply of winter jackets. Thank you to everyone who has donated to the Sumner School designated funds during your offering. The donations were greatly appreciated by Sumner School and were a great example of Christian love.

Pack the Pews 2020 was a huge success. We donated pounds of food to the Austin Salvation Army. Thank you to everyone who donated this year.

Go and Be Reconciled

presented by Ambassadors of Reconciliation, a 3-part Bible study seminar on
Sunday January 10, 2021 from 630-830pm – Part 1
Tuesday January 12, 2021 from 630-830pm – Part 2
Thursday January 14, 2021 from 630-830pm – Part 3

We hope and pray this Bible Study will be a blessing for our congregation and hope and pray you will take the time to be a part of it. All are invited.

This will be done so no group gatherings are needed. You will be able to participate in any of these ways

Real time via ZOOM from your home - Internet required. Study Guide provided.

Real time via phone from your home – no internet required. Study Guide provided .

Recorded sessions – available the following day from your home or at church - internet required.
Study Guide provided.

Digital recording of each session to view in your home. Available 1-2 days following each session.

No internet required but DVD player is needed. Study Guide provided.

Study Guide – no internet required. A Study Guide can be picked at church or will be delivered to your home.

All fees for this have been paid; you can participate at no charge to you.

All who register will receive the study guide for Go and Be Reconciled and a copy of Forgiven to Forgive, a 6 week devotions booklet for your daily reading and devotions. The study guide and devotions booklet can be picked up in the church office starting January 4, or contact the church office to arrange for home delivery. Registration can be done by online at <https://www.aorhope.org/customerevents/austin> or by calling the church office at 433-2642. An email or phone number are needed for your registration. Contact Pastor, or an Elder if you cannot get registered using the online link.

Times for members to share their thoughts and concerns about our church with the Ambassadors of Reconciliation leaders will be scheduled for the week of January 18-22, 2021. Times will be scheduled online, or by calling the church office.

This seminar has been recommended by the Minnesota South District for our church, was endorsed by the Church Council and voted on and approved at a special Congregation meeting.

Please take the time to be part of this; participate in the Bible Study, use the daily devotions and share any thoughts and concerns you have about our Congregation.

Board of Elders

Frequently asked questions about the Bible

Q: Is there anything referring to the ages of the disciples and followers of Jesus? Please include Timothy and Titus, at the time they were made overseers.

A: The New Testament does not provide us with specific information regarding the age of the disciples of Jesus, or of Timothy and Titus. We therefore can only conjecture. Commentators sometimes point out, for example, that since the fishing business involved the kind of hard labor only younger men were able to endure, Peter and Andrew, James and John, were probably younger men in their 20s and 30s. Commentators (Fee, Kelly, e.g.) believe that the reference to Timothy's youth in 1 Tim. 4:12 could mean that he was a man in his low to mid 30s. And, of course, we must remember-- as scholars also observe-- that life expectancy was much lower in the ancient world than it is today. This fact makes it all the more likely that the disciples, probably for the most part, were younger men. Again, this is only guess work, so that we must be highly tentative regarding any conclusions that are drawn in this regard. In Jewish tradition the age 30 was regarded as the time of maturity and the minimum age for public teaching. It is possible, although not certain, that Titus and Timothy would have fulfilled this requirement.

Q: How can we be sure the Biblical accounts of Jesus' death are accurate? I understand the books of the Bible were used for basis of fact for the movie, The Passion. If so, were not they taken from the Biblical author's best recollections "decades" after the event? Even if these recollections were the "inspired" word of God, how then do we know for sure these Biblical accounts were not "skewed" because of the author's cultural/spiritual prejudices of his time, or simply subject to error because of the length of time after the fact?

A: First, it is important to recognize that belief in the Scriptures as God's Word and the certain conviction that they do not lie to us come to an individual only when the Holy Spirit works in that person's heart as a result of faith in Jesus Christ created through the Gospel. No amount of reasonable, historical arguments--however helpful they may be--will ultimately convince anyone of the truth of the Scriptural writings. Skeptics, whatever their intellectual or personal presuppositions may be, will never be convinced on the basis of reason. We need to remember that even the religious authorities in Jesus time, who always sought "signs" to prove everything, would not be convinced even "if someone should rise from the dead" (Luke 16:31). This being said, anyone who has carefully looked at the history of the biblical canon will quickly discover that the biblical writings were not mere "recollections" that came into being decades after the events recorded in the sacred text. Those who want to disparage the Bible have long used this argument, which is easily discounted even with casual familiarity with the way the biblical writers approached their task. Take for example, the first four verses of Luke's Gospel. They reveal a careful and meticulous historian at work. It will always be mystifying to Christians why the skeptics among us are far more ready to accept as historical other ancient documents, the texts of which date centuries--not mere years--from the date of their purported happening. All this said, however, in the end the conviction that the Bible is God's truthful Word is a faith-conviction arrived at apart from merely intellectual endeavor.

Q: On what date was Jesus born?

A: The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church (Third Edition, 1998) in its article on Christmas details the history of the dating of Christmas. The article points out that the time of Christ's birth was a matter of speculation and even dispute in the early centuries of the Christian church. The celebration of Christ's birth on a specific day did not become a general practice until the 4th century. The earliest mention of December 25 is in a calendar representing Roman practice of the year 336, the date probably chosen to oppose the pagan feast of the sun. Other traditions of the dating were present, including the Eastern tradition of connecting Christ's birth with Epiphany on January 6 (a practice still followed in the Eastern churches). The

Scriptures, of course, do not give us a precise date for Christ's birth and therefore it must always remain a matter of conjecture. It is not a doctrinal matter.

Q: How does the Church arrive at a Friday crucifixion if our Lord plainly said he would descend for three days and three nights? Assuming that Jesus arose on the first day (sometime after the Sabbath but before dawn) and counting backwards I count a Wednesday crucifixion.

A: In the entry under Chronology in the Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels (Intervarsity, 1992), H.W. Hoehner offers a helpful summary of the chronology of Passion Week. He says: "Traditionally, Jesus is thought to have died on the Friday of Passion Week." On the basis of Matthew 12:40, he says, "some conclude Jesus could not have died on Friday; Jesus may have died on Wednesday or Thursday, thus allowing for three days and three nights. However, when one recognizes that the Jews reckoned a part of a day as a whole day, Jesus' death on Friday does not present a real problem. Furthermore, the New Testament repeatedly refers to Jesus' resurrection as having occurred on the third day (not the fourth day; e.g., Matt. 16:21; 17:23; Luke 9:22; 18:33; Acts 10:40; 1 Cor. 15:4). Moreover, the Gospels specifically mention the day before the Sabbath (Friday) as the day of his death (Matt. 27:62; Mark. 15:42; Luke 23:54; John 19:14, 31, 42). Therefore, both scripturally and traditionally, it seems best to accept Friday as the day of Jesus' death."

Q: My husband and I recently went to see the movie, 'The Passion.' I was wondering who the man was with Mary and Mary Magdalene. My husband believes it was Jesus' brother, James. My mother and I were unaware that Jesus had a brother. Why isn't there more talk about Jesus' entire family, if it is true that James was his brother?

A: Perhaps a couple of comments in response to your letter will be helpful. Based on my own viewing of The Passion of the Christ, it is my understanding that the young man present on numerous occasions with Mary and Mary Magdalene was the disciple John, the Beloved-who became the "son" of the Mother of Jesus, and she his "Mother." There are a number of "James" referred to in the New Testament, including one called "brother of the Lord." He is listed first among the brothers of Jesus, presumably as the oldest of them (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3). Most scholars think that he is the same person as the one simply referred to as James in the book of Acts (12:17; 15:13; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7) and in Galatians (2:9, 12). There has been some dispute regarding the relationship between Jesus and James, the natural interpretation being that James was the son of Mary and Joseph (thus a "half-brother" to Jesus). In the history of the Christian church, some believing in the perpetual virginity of Mary developed the view that Jesus and James were foster brothers, while others conjectured that they were cousins. LCMS theologians have found no difficulty with the view that Mary and Joseph themselves together had other children, including James.

Taken from LCMS website

**Minutes of the Annual Fall Voters' Meeting of St. John's Lutheran Church
held at Austin, Minnesota, on Sunday, November 22, 2020 at 12:15 p.m.
Pursuant to the By-Laws**

The annual Fall Voters' meeting of St. John's Lutheran Church was called to order at 12:15 p.m. by President Dale Siegfried with 24 members present. Note: because of the Corvid 19 pandemic, there were no attendance sign-in sheets, but individual ticket-size papers.

OPENING PRAYER: Given by Pastor James Groleau.

SECRETARY'S REPORT: M/S/P to accept the secretary's report from July 26, 2020 as corrected.

BOARD REPORTS: The attached written reports from the Elders, Education and Youth & Family, Evangelism, Social Ministry, Trustees, Sunday School, Stewardship, and Radio Broadcast were distributed. Reports included goals and accomplishments to date. The floor was opened for questions of the boards. No questions or discussions were communicated.

Thad Kusick, elder, explained registering for the Ambassadors of Reconciliation "Go and Be Reconciled Seminar" on December 6-8, 2020.

PASTOR'S REPORT: Written report for the past year was submitted and attached. Funerals-7. Baptisms-3. Because of the pandemic attendance has been sporadic; recently it has been: physically in church, 40-50; online internet streaming, 20-30; radio, no way of tracking; phone, 1-5. A lot more was included in his attached report.

**FINANCE COMMITTEE BUDGET DISCUSSION & ADOPTION OF 2021 BUDGET:
by Dick Heuton, Treasurer**

The Finance Committee highlights recap and budget are attached. The recommended budget was adjusted to increase the Sunday School/CASE line item budget from \$450 to \$800; and add a line item to the Elders budget for \$700 to cover Portals of Prayer for the congregation. M/S/P to approve the adjusted budget for 2021.

OLD BUSINESS:

Dale Siegfried made a plea to get a vice president.

NEW BUSINESS:

It was noted that LWML, because of the pandemic, can no longer pay for Portals of Prayer to be purchase for every household in St. Johns. Tim Carlson, head elder, suggested that the cost come out of the elders fund. M/S/P to accept this offer.

ADJOURNMENT: 1:15 p.m.

CLOSING: Lord's Prayer

Respectfully submitted, Donna Bailey, Council Secretary

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

December 8, 2020

The December 8, 2020, meeting was called to order by President Dale Siegfleid at 7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Lori Siegfleid, Dale Siegfleid, Pastor James, Tim Carlson, Dick Heuton, Darrel Bahn, Kathy Carlson, David Ruhnke, Donna Bailey

OPENING PRAYER: Pastor Groleau

SECRETARY'S REPORT: M/S/P to accept the secretary's report for November 10, 2020, as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT:

Net Operating Loss: \$(60,286.15). Net Decrease in Designated Assets: \$(9,711.46). M/S/P to accept the Treasurer's report, as written. After discussing the PPP loan forgiveness, it was decided to apply for the \$25,882.97 payment from the government in 2021.

ELDERS' REPORT:

Reconciliation with Ambassadors of Reconciliation was moved to January 2021 due to COVID numbers and the Governors restrictions on group gatherings through December 18. The Bible Study "Go and Be Reconciled" is set for Sunday Jan. 10, Tuesday Jan. 12, Thursday Jan. 14 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. A letter was sent to congregation members explaining how they can participate and how to register. Group Elder interview on Friday Jan. 15 and group Council interview on Saturday Jan. 16 was scheduled, time to be decided. Individual interviews will be on Monday Jan. 18 through Friday Jan. 22 will be scheduled. The Bible study guide "Go and Be Reconciled" and devotions booklet "A Reason for Hope" were passed out to council members and elders.

Dave Watkins, working with Dave Ruhnke from Trustees, with input from Youth/Family and Education Boards, worked on the Child Protection Policy for Grinnell insurance.

M/S/P from Elders, then from the Council, to accept a release from membership for Tony and Karla Muller and Abigail Muller.

TRUSTEES' REPORT:

Our insurance company now requires a key policy which Trustees have since established to control key holders for the exterior door locks in order to ensure safety and reduce the risk of theft or vandalism. All exit doors will have new locks in late January. Members will sign the sheet on the bulletin boards to apply for a new key (deadline to apply is January 10). More information will appear in Sunday bulletins and January newsletter about implementation.

The brick window sill outside one of the chapel windows has been repaired.

A vinegar/water solution used for disinfection around the church is being replaced with a commercial product that is effective against COVID-19. Early on, a vinegar/water solution was thought to be effective against COVID-19 but has been proven false.

One of the timers used to control outdoor lights has malfunctioned and will be replaced this week.

Since wifi performance in the sanctuary appears to be weak, plans are being made for improvement.

BOARD OF EDUCATION and YOUTH & FAMILY BOARD:

Patty Shatek, Alisha Meyer, Nicole Kramer and Lori Siegfried met conjointly and briefly discussed goals for the upcoming year.

We also put together Sunday school take-home packets for December and January. It was discussed that we would purchase a gift for each packet and also candy canes. Patty will check at Hobby Lobby for a small craft gift to include with the packets and Alisha will purchase candy canes with a note attached explaining the meaning of the candy cane.

Patty and Lori will finish putting the packets together with the gifts on Tuesday, November 24th at 6:00 p.m.

The packets will be ready to be picked up after Thanksgiving. Sunday school families will be notified that the packets are available on Sunday, December 6th.

The boards have decided not to meet during the month of December. Our next meeting has been tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, January 12th at 5:30 p.m.

STEWARDSHIP BOARD:

The 2021 offering envelopes are available for pickup along the east wall of the sanctuary. They'll decide in January what to do with envelopes that haven't been picked up.

SOCIAL MINISTRY:

No report.

EVANGELISM:

An ad telling of our holiday worship services was placed in the Mower County Shopper. The ad will run for 6 weeks and the cost was \$252.00.

A new member packet was given to Michael and Susan Gosha.

PASTOR'S REPORT:

The COVID-19 situation continues and as I'm sure many of you have heard the number of infections has risen in Minnesota and the surrounding states. Please continue to take all necessary precautions when coming to church. Clean your hands, wear your mask, etc. It is wonderful that the 9:00 a.m. Sunday service is filling to near capacity.

To alleviate the possible over crowding at the 9:00 service we have added an additional Sunday service. I would encourage you to take a look at the 11:00 Sunday service. Like the 9:00 a.m. service it is archived on our churches website (StJohnsAustinLcms.org/sermons/). If you appreciate that style of music and worship please join us there to lighten the load at the 9:00 service. I know that time slot is not the most convenient for everyone, but it is another worship time available to the congregation.

We also have a Wednesday 6:30 p.m. service which is a duplicate of the preceding Sunday 9:00 service. There we can, if necessary, utilize the entire sanctuary providing the possibility for extreme social distancing.

Bible studies are mostly on hold. Last month I encouraged people to attend Bible studies. That, like so many things, now has to be limited. We can adequately provide social distancing and a safe environment for one Bible Study at a time in the fellowship hall; which means that "Total Forgiveness" will continue until the end of December. A new class will start in January.

The Shut-Ins have been on my mind for months. Our church's ability to minister to them has been severely hampered. Opportunities to visit them open and close quickly. I am sending monthly devotions and letters. I have encouraged the congregation, especially during the Advent and Christmas season to send cards and letters to encourage them and let them know they are not forgotten.

Addressing the Lord's Supper to our Shut-Ins: There has been a long conversation throughout our Synod concerning how to bring God's gift of this Sacred Meal to those who cannot get to church or whom we

cannot visit. Without going into all of the academic theological discussion our synod holds that such things should be done in person. This is a Sacrament, a Sacred Act of the Church as instituted by Christ, and it should not be reduced to anything less. Communion by: Television, Internet, Phone, or Radio can lead down a path of unintended consequences that have befallen other churches. These things should be avoided. My letter to them included, “Mark 16:16 records Jesus’ words, ‘Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved.’ As Luther often taught, ‘Cling to your Baptism daily.’ It is through Holy Baptism that you are declared a child of God and marked as one redeemed by Christ.”

Confirmation class is on track and doing well. We have nine students, three of them are in their second year. In discussions with students and parents we have continued to meet in person with large social distance spaces. We are planning Palm Sunday March 28 for Confirmation Sunday.

The Youth ministries at St. John’s are also severely hampered. We’ve had to shut down nearly everything we do. There was some discussion about a Youth Christmas program. We invited all senior youth (Confirmation and older) to participate in a youth led service on December 13. It was short notice, but we got enough to join so that we can put the program on. There will be a youth led skit, no costumes or interaction. I wrote along with music played by the youth.

CASE, and its track record for growing church, though not meeting, continues prompt attention throughout the district. It has especially attracted the attention of some cross-cultural groups. The hope is to start a CASE-like program in two of these ministries here is Austin when the COVID situation is alleviated. We are having another meeting with the Sudanese group in January to explore that among other things.

Starting to plan for Lent 2/17.

Christmas Eve has always been a service with a full attendance. This year to accommodate the potentially larger crowd we will schedule 4 services on Christmas Eve with limited seating. We are asking members to sign up for the services they would like to attend. This is to ensure we do not get too many in the sanctuary. They will be as follows:

3:30 p.m. “Sermon: Jesus: The First Fruits of Jesse’s Tree” (Traditional Style service) This will be a candlelight service. It will be dark enough in the sanctuary for the candles but light enough for those who would like to avoid driving home in the dark. (Sunset of Christmas Eve this year is at 4:30pm.)

6:30 p.m. “Sermon: Behold the Child Jesus: Son of Mary” This service will finalize the “Behold the Child” series. This service will also close with candlelight.

9:00 p.m. “Sermon: Jesus: The First Fruits of Jesse’s Tree” (Praise Style service) This will be a candlelight service with the same message as the 3:30pm service but with a different liturgy and music.

11:00 p.m. “Sermon: Why Did Jesus Come” This will be a modified Compline (End of Day) service, for those of you familiar with the Hours of the Church. This will be a candlelight service concluding at about midnight welcoming the New Born King.

On Christmas Day we will have a service at 10:00 a.m. with a message titled, “Infinite Gifts in Finite Wrappings.” This will be a service similar to those of past years celebrating the wonder found in Jesus the Holy Christ of God.

Lent comes early this year. Ash Wednesday is on February 17. Plans for lent have already begun.

Lastly in reference to the troubles here at St. John’s, I would like to encourage everyone to be a part of the Ambassadors of Reconciliation (AoR) process, regardless of what you have, or have not, heard. This is not a process for a few people. This is a process to help the congregation heal from past scars and wounds, and to move forward with Christ as our Leader. The work they do to help hurting churches is significant and important. St. John’s has not been a stranger to trouble for many years. St. John’s needs to become a stranger to trouble. From the moment I arrived I have been showing the amazing potential St. John’s has to grow. As I have stated repeatedly we have resources and opportunity most congregations would envy. St. John’s can be

a growing and vibrant church affecting the community we serve profoundly. The things that have gone on here are far beneath good Christian conduct. The things done and said, to and about, my family are painful. A healthy church does not act like this. AoR's work here will provide healing from the past, and instill a vibrant future for this congregation. Sadly some have determined that will not happen. It needs to. Which is why everyone needs to be a part of it. This is more than fixing a few issues. There is a systemic problem with too much of what happens in this church. A future without those problems is a future of growing and prospering. Please pray about this, and pray about your part in healing this church. That starts by registering for the AoR Bible study starting January 10.

OLD BUSINESS:

None

NEW BUSINESS:

M/S/P to schedule the Council interview with AoR on Saturday, Jan. 16, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.; and our regular council meeting on January 19 because the AoR Bible study is on January 12.

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

CLOSING PRAYER:

Respectfully submitted: Donna Bailey, Council Secretary

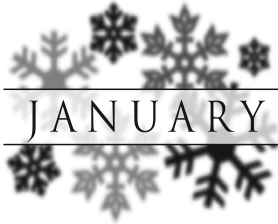
St. John's Lutheran Church Financial Recap
January 1, 2020 through November 30, 2020

| Undesignated Assets | Balance 1/1/20 | Activity | Balance 11/30/2020 | Notes |
|---|-----------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|---|
| Cash | \$199,211.92 | \$234,093.91 | \$433,305.83 | Undesignated Assets represent the funds available for general operating purposes. |
| Prepays/Other Assets | 13,831.09 | (1,120.98) | 12,710.11 | |
| Buildings & Land | 3,096,411.00 | (268,719.00) | 2,827,692.00 | |
| Liabilities | (5,171.02) | 35,132.12 | 29,961.10 | |
| Net Operating Income (Loss) | | <u>(\$613.95)</u> | | |
| Designated Assets | | | | |
| Building Fund | 107,467.19 | 1,199.19 | 108,666.38 | Designated Assets represent all of the various funds that can be contributed to for the designated purpose. |
| Needy Family Fund | 1,667.08 | (500.00) | 1,167.08 | |
| Women's Ministry Fund | 1,923.46 | 0.00 | 1,923.46 | |
| Rachel's Hope Fund | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.00 | |
| Musical Equipment Fund | 283.68 | 0.00 | 283.68 | |
| Library Books Fund | 394.17 | 100.00 | 494.17 | |
| Choir Robes Fund | 3,111.00 | 0.00 | 3,111.00 | |
| Memorial Fund | 14,481.11 | 5,946.10 | 20,427.21 | |
| Praise Band Fund | 3,135.40 | 0.00 | 3,135.40 | |
| Youth Fund | 7,117.18 | 1,729.69 | 8,846.87 | |
| Scrip Fund | 15,452.11 | (15,452.11) | 0.00 | |
| Sumner School Fund | 8,746.72 | (2,157.11) | 6,589.61 | |
| undesignated | | 0.00 | 0.00 | |
| Endowment Fund | 41,316.30 | (327.22) | 40,989.08 | |
| | <u>205,095.40</u> | | <u>195,633.94</u> | |
| Increase (Decrease) in Designated Assets | | <u>(\$9,461.46)</u> | | |
| Net Income (Loss) | | <u><u>(\$10,075.41)</u></u> | | |

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

January, 2021

NEWSLETTER



ST. JOHN'S NEWS

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