

St. John's News

April, 2021



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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

I've said this before. All statistics and data show by 2030 much of the institutional church in America will have significantly collapsed. We cannot just wish that away. It is just the truth as it stands right now. 16 is the number. Only 16% of churches are growing right now in America. Saying that will not win a popular vote. That doesn't change the truth we face right now. COVID has only accelerated what was already happening. What are we to do?

The task before is to help give birth to what comes next, different as it might be, but deeply rooted in faithfulness to the Word of God and a faithful adherence to the Lutheran Confessions. Why can't we lose those things? Aren't they in the way. Having been part of growing churches for years I can tell you they are never in the way, they are the way. The Word of God and our Confessions are our identity. To give those up would be to give up who we are. That we cannot do.

Let's start with some disclosure first:

We are facing a difficult task. (69% of Americans say religious leaders are unethical.) A difficult path lies before us, but we can't wait too long. (Worry causes pause. Hope hops forward.)

I will rejoice in the Lord;

I will take joy in the God of my salvation.

God, the Lord, is my strength;

He makes my feet like the deer;

He makes me tread on high places.

Habakkuk 3:18-19

So if I'm "preaching change" what changes can we make? Let's look at what has changed for nearly everyone in America. One major change that often, oddly, goes unnoticed, is the disappearance of the extended family. The once was a day when dad, mom, kids, grandpa, grandma, uncles, aunts and cousins were all in church together every week. I personally remember seeing my great-grandparents in church every week. In that world what happens when baby Molly had a meltdown and starts crying uncontrollably, and very loudly. Mom gets a little stressed, then grandma Schmidtke, or aunt Beulah takes little meltdown Molly on their lap, and over a few minutes someone gets little Molly to mellow down and be quite. Attention returns to the pastor's sermon, which through all the chaos went on uninterrupted. He finally says "Amen." All go home and no one remembers Molly's meltdown.

That was the good ol' days. There was a lot of good in those days. Family supported family. Generation passed down wisdom and experience to the next generation and the next. That was then. Where are we now?

The idea of the extended family present in church has become rare. It is still found here are there, and generally it is seen in

faithful, respected families in the church. They look different in some ways. Those they may have challenges and challenging kids they are often perceived as “having it all together.” The problem is overall they are rare.

Good to hear, but what can we do about it? Jobs move. People move. That’s life in today’s mobile world. It is, so let’s change it where we can. Let me give you two examples of simple things we can do.

- 1) The church, the local congregation, needs to become that extended family. When a young family comes into church, lend a hand. Just step up, sit with them or invite them to sit with you. Help carry the “baby stuff.” Just be present, friendly, kind and patient. I can assure you that will do far more than any sermon. It will go much further than any marketing campaign. That is a message that gets talked about often. You’ve often heard word-of-mouth is the best advertising. Get people talking about how families are welcome at St. John’s.
- 2) The church, the local congregation, needs to become that extended family. (That might look like I’m repeating myself. I am.) when an older couple, or person, comes into our church, lend a hand. Just step up, sit with them or invite them to sit with you. Treat them with the respect you would give to a grandparent whom you love and respect. Just be present, friendly, kind and patient. I can assure you that will do far more than any sermon. It will go much further than any marketing campaign. That is a message that gets talked about often. You’ve often heard word-of-mouth is the best advertising. Get people talking about how people are welcome at St. John’s.

It might sound too simple. Maybe that’s why it has been so illusive. In the five churches I’ve been part of, and watched grow, all of them did this in some fashion.

The next thing we can do is a little more complex, but here it is. Eat together. It might sound too simple. Maybe that’s why it has been so illusive. What do extended families do. They get together, talk together, and eat together. Food is the glue that causes people to stick together. When you share a meal and conversation relationships prosper, bonds grow, connections and feeling connected increase and improve. People that feel connected, welcome, and respected don’t leave. We need more pot-lucks! What could be more Lutheran?!

I’m just throwing this out there. I haven’t really talked to anyone about this much, but hears my thought. Everybody eats. Generally everybody eats lunch, and generally they eat that right after church. So what if we had a little potluck after church every month? What if we sat down together, all at the same table, and ate “family-style.” You know, like a family. Push some tables together, set the food down in the middle, sit across from each other, and pass the vittles.

That all sounds good. Now just add one more thing. Invite visitors. Don’t just tell them about it, don’t just invite them. Without being too rude, make them come. Insist they join us. Show them radical hospitality. At the meal, tell them we do this all the time. Tell them everybody brings a little and everyone eats. (... and talks even more.)

Now we are Americans so there is a variant to all of this that must be addressed. It is crucial for some that this matter gets handled well! There is a season when a slight change will be required. That season is Football Season. During such times a big TV and comfortable seating will be required. Our youth room, a bunch of guys, and those gals that love the game can sit in there and enjoy it together. Still eating together. Still talking together. Still building bonds. (I’m fairly sure it would work even if there were Viking fans and Packer fans in the same room. {grin})

It’s a change to the way we do things. It’s a change to the way you do things. ...but it’s not a major change. It is palatable to nearly everyone. You know what else it is? It’s evangelism!!! It’s just not the scary kind. For too long the Church has focused on those empty pews. St. John’s did it right when they put their Mission Statement and Mission Logo together.

If the pews are empty how do we fix it? P.E.W.S.

Proclaim God's Word,
Encourage one another in faith,
Witness to God's love and
Serve all people.

As we do that we get Kingdom focused instead of empty pews focused. Together we prioritize for souls, we make plans and chart a new course. Together we begin the difficult task of walking toward a new future, prayerfully asking God to bless it.

Changes like these are kind of like moving to a new house. Especially when downsizing. However you might do it the process is essentially the same. Make three piles:

Pile 1 – Keep it. Need it.

Pile 2 – “Didn’t even know I still had that.” Dump it.

Pile 3 – Undecided. “I’ll have to think about that one.” Save it for later.

That Pile 3 ultimately needs to move to Pile 1 or Pile 2. There will be those things for which we say, “‘Mr. Thing,’ we’ve loved you. You’ve served us well. Now we must say, ‘Good-bye.’”

The Church, this church, if it survives and thrives beyond 2030, will be saying good-bye to a lot of things that have served us well. Some of those things may not be easy to let go. Some of those things may be cherished treasures we’ve coddled and cared for. We watched them grow, succeed, and do well. Then we watch them age, fade, and go away. That’s all part of life. You saw it with your first pet hamster. You’ll see it again.

The concern is procrastination. Putting off the process of digging into Pile 3 for so long there is no room for developing the new skills, the new ideas, and the new convictions and cherished treasures yet to come. Treasures you’ll need as the church begins to grow. If you wait too long, the moving truck will come and drive away, leaving you and all the old stuff behind.

It’s time for the Church to downsize. It’s time to go through all the “old boxes” and see what goes into what pile. Clear the shelves so there is room for new stuff. In all of this, above all stop seeing a shrinking Church body as a threat. Start seeing the opportunity. Every lost soul is fruit ready for the harvest.

Jesus said to His disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; so pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”
[Matthew 9:37-38]

The future can be bright, different in some ways, but bright. For congregations that can build some new ideas, and have the courage to give them a try; for those who don’t wait too long, a changing world can find the unchanging Truth right here. It’s so easy in the middle of being deeply invested in the rhythms and routines of the congregation to deceive ourselves into thinking our reality is not as bad as it is. That deception is the devil’s tool. We decide, “It’s not that bad.” We do nothing differently and we look no different that all the other closing congregations that have succumb to his lies.

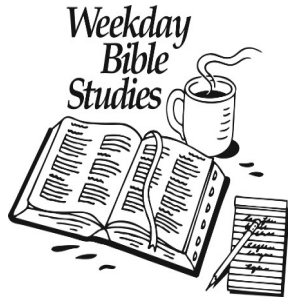
I’d like to encourage everyone to begin to ponder and pray about what a grand opening at St. John’s might look like. COVID’s affect on us is shrinking. Slowly. Too slowly! Still let’s start thinking about a September time Grand Opening. A time to let Austin know we are open for business! Come see what we’ve got.

What have we got? Peace, mercy, forgiveness, and shoulders to share the burdens of life. That is evangelism. It’s relationships. Relationships through which we share the Gospel, because the Gospel is the focus.

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

Together in the Word



Sunday: Adult Bible class at 10:00 a.m. Pastor James is leading discussion on the book of Romans in Schleicher Hall.

Tuesday: Women's Bible study meets at 1:00 p.m. at St. John's. We are currently studying the book of Luke.

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.

Thursday: Men's Bible Study - join us at 5:00 pm on Thursdays, for topics and lessons based on Biblical truths that will challenge and guide your attitude, words, and actions as a Christian. Check it out.

The Sunday morning Bible study on Romans will be live streamed on our Youtube channel. To find it go to Youtube.com and search for "St John's Austin, MN" (Type those words exactly to make it easier to find.) You will find the live stream running there at about 10:10am. The actual Bible study may start a little after that as we wait for people to make their way to the fellowship hall.

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



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

April Birthdays for Shut-Ins

06 Robin Orth
08 Darlene Trimble
11 Virginia Bly



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

WE WANT TO SEND A BIG THANK YOU AND CONGRATULATIONS TO THE YOUTH FOR THEIR COMMITMENT TO A MISSION PROJECT. THEY FILLED MITE BOXES AND DONATED \$86.79. IT HAS ALL BEEN SENT OUT TO HELP OTHERS.

THE QUILTING GROUP HAS GIFTED EACH CONFIRMAND WITH A QUILT. WE PRAY THEY WILL ALWAYS REMIND THEM OF THEIR CONFIRMATION VOWS.

OUR HOPE IS TO RETURN TO SERVICE WORK BY FALL. HAVE A VERY BLESSED EASTER AS WE REJOICE IN OUR LORD'S RESURRECTION. SANDY GRANT

Sunday School

The plan is to have in-person Sunday School beginning Sunday, April 11th, from 10:00-11:00 a.m. Masks are required and social distancing will be enforced.

THE FORMAT WILL BE DIFFERENT AS, AT THIS POINT, WE PLAN TO MEET TOGETHER AS A GROUP. CRAFTS, VIDEOS, WEEKLY BIBLE VERSES, SNACK, PRAYER REQUESTS, AND SOME OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES (WEATHER PERMITTING). PLEASE JOIN US FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL ON APRIL 11TH. THIS COURSE WILL RUN FOR SIX WEEKS – APRIL 11TH THROUGH MAY 16TH. ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT PATTY SHATEK (440-6336), ALISHA MEYER (438-0996) OR LORI SIEGFREID (437-7394).

RADIO MINISTRY

Dear fellow Members of St. Johns and Friends,

Thank you to all who have supported the Radio Broadcast. We now have several openings starting mid-April and into the coming months. Please prayerfully consider sponsoring a Sunday broadcast. We are thankful to be able to continue this ministry because of the support of our members and listeners. If you would like to make a donation to St. Johns Radio Broadcast you can mail your donation to St. Johns or to our home, The Petersen's 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 please make checks payable to St. Johns Radio Broadcast.

April 4, 2021 Given in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Ervin Graff, Mr. & Mrs. Herbert Graff, Mr. & Mrs. Vernon Graff, Mr. & Mrs. Marvin Graff, Chester & Louis Graff, Ralph & Loraine Wright, by the Graff family.

April 11, 2021 Sponsored by Michael & Susan Gosha to the Glory of God!

April 18, 2021 Sponsored by Wayne and Fran Strouf in thankfulness to God for the radio broadcast, to God be the Glory!

April 25, 2021 Sponsored by Randy and Doraine Graff to the Glory of God and in thankfulness for their 40th wedding they are celebrating today.

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

Script cards are available after each Sunday service. Check out the new list of businesses available. Orders, with payment, must be in by the third Sunday of the month, **Sunday, April 18**. The cards should be here the following Sunday. Place your order and check on the Scrip table or bring it to the office. These cards help the ministries of our congregation so consider purchasing them.

Stewardship

John 20:1 – “Now on the first day of the week ...” All is made new by the Resurrection of Jesus! Even the day of worship has transitioned from the Old Testament's Saturday Sabbath to the Lord's Day of the New Testament. For the Lord has made all things new. He has begun a new week for a new creation in rising from the dead as the New Adam. We are also made new in Him – a new heart, a new life, new desires, and a new outlook toward God. All this comes from our Risen Lord's grace. Especially after the sort of year we've had since last Easter. It's sure good news to hear that the Lord makes all things start afresh.

Synod to celebrate ‘Here I Stand’ Sunday in April

On April 18, 1521, three and a half years after he nailed the 95 Theses to the church door in Wittenberg, Martin Luther made his historic stand at the Diet (official meeting) in the German city of Worms (pronounced “Vorms”). Accused of fostering heresy, he was directed by Charles V and other leaders to recant his teaching about the pure Gospel or face death.

As recounted in his collected works, Luther concluded his statement to the Diet with the words: “Since then your serene majesty and your lordships seek a simple answer, I will give it in this manner, neither horned nor toothed: Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in

the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience.

“I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me, Amen” (LW 32:112–13).

On April 18, 2021, the Synod will commemorate the 500th anniversary of Luther’s defiant defense of the pure Gospel by observing “Here I Stand” Sunday, as called for by the adoption of Resolution 4–09 at the 2019 Synod convention. The resolution reads, in part:

“WHEREAS, Scripture gives us encouragement with these words: ‘Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful’ (Heb. 10:23) ... therefore be it Resolved, That April 18, 2021, be declared ‘Here I Stand’ Sunday throughout The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, its districts, circuits, and congregations ... and be it finally Resolved, That our churches and people be encouraged to spend time in prayer, asking the Lord to continue to bless the proclamation of the Gospel.”

In the coming weeks, congregations and individual contributors may also anticipate further Synod communications on how they might participate in the gathering of a Synodwide thank offering, as called for in Res. 4-09, as part of the anniversary celebration.

Find resources and ideas for celebrating: lcms.org/here-i-stand-sunday

Learn about the history of the Reformation: lutheranreformation.org

From the Library

Secrets of the Heart by Al and Joanna Lacy is this month’s featured book. Many of you remember Mrs. O’Leary’s cow causing the great 1871 Chicago fire. The devastation this fire caused not only burned out neighborhoods, but devastated families. How do you cope? Kathleen O’Malley learned fast. A school friend invited her to stay with them, but Kathleen did not want to be beholden to anyone. She was very determined to find a job. Her determination was evident throughout the book. BUT one thing she didn’t count on was the impact her friend Hennie’s invitation to join them at church. From the first service the impact of the Holy Spirit is woven in her heart as the story progresses. Kathleen finds happiness when she meets Peter, but his tragic death brings out the worst possible outcome in her in-laws dealing with her and her daughter.



The story keeps pulling you in and you have to read another page, then two to find out what happens next. You will find this book in St. John’s library which hasn’t been closed since the pandemic started.

Join us this National Day of Prayer – Thursday May 6th, 2021

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers for all the Lord’s people”

(Ephesians 6:18)

AS we have in the past years, St John’s will again be observing the National Day of Prayer with a Prayer Vigil and mid-day prayer worship service.

This day has a long history in our country, going back to George Washington and the War for Independence. Abraham Lincoln called for a Day of Prayer and Thanksgiving during the Civil War that become our Thanksgiving Holiday we observe each November. President Truman signed a bill in 1952 that each President declare a National Day of Prayer, and President Reagan amended the law in 1988 so that the National Day of Prayer be observed the 1st Thursday in May.

A Prayer Vigil will start at 9am on Thursday May 6th and continue until 12 noon and then again from 1pm to 6pm, in the Chapel at St John’s. Sign up for a 20minute time period to pray for and consider the many blessings we have been granted. Pray for your family and friends, St John’s and the LCMS, our State and Federal government officials, our country and our world, as well as your personal petitions.

A prayer guide will also be provided to assist you.

The mid-day Prayer service will be from 12:15-12:45 in the Sanctuary. Pastor James will lead this service of Prayer, hymns and Psalms. Invite your friends, all are welcome.

Please consider joining us on this National Day of Prayer by signing up for one 20minute prayer period (or more) or attending the mid-day Prayer Service. We would like to have all 9 morning periods filled as well as the 15 afternoon/evening periods so there are continuous prayers offered throughout this 2021 National Day of Prayer.

Signup sheets will be posted in April on the bulletin board at the east (office) door.

“the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayers...” (1 Peter 3: 12)

“The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.” (James 5:14)

What is Medicare Certified Home Care Program and how could we help you?

Our Medicare Certified Home Care is as it states, we are certified through Medicare.

How can you qualify for our Program?

The Criteria is that you are **Homebound** and need a **Skilled Service**.

Homebound, means it is difficult for you to leave your home, down step, into a car, etc. Usually a person who is homebound uses a walker or a cane. You may have post-surgery restrictions or are weak from a recent hospitalization or have dementia. Being homebound has nothing to do with being able to drive and it is not a choice. A person would need to think twice about going anywhere because it is so much work. This does not mean that you can never leave your home during this period of Coverage.

What you CAN do: **Someone** can take you to doctor's appointments, **Someone** can take you to Church, and **Someone** can take you to a hair appointment or a special family event. However, if you are able to hop in the car and go to Walmart with your daughter and get groceries, you probably are not homebound and would not qualify. However, during this pandemic, people could be homebound because of Covid restriction. **Skilled Services:** There must be a **need** and you would benefit from one of 3 skilled services: A Skilled Nurse, a Physical Therapist or a Speech Therapist. We need a doctor's order for the Skilled Service. It will be ordered by your primary care physician.

A Registered Nurse would complete an assessment to determine if an individual would qualify, and what Skilled Services would be beneficial to the individual and Goals would be discussed.

Progress would be documented to show improvement to meet those Goals. When individual's goals are met they are discharged from the program. Because of the improvement, you are able to get back to your normal life and routine.

Good Samaritan Society Home Care will bill Medicare on your behalf and all services are usually paid 100%. We also accept Medicare HMO's (that may have deductible and copay), VA, private insurance and private pay. With any questions, please call 507-377-1701.

Sincerely,

Dee Lehner, LPN

Liaison, Good Samaritan Society Home Care

A Word on the Equality Act

**To the Pastors, Called Workers and Members
of the 6,000 Congregations of
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**

The words of the apostle Peter apply to us now:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith — more precious

than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire — may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory. (1 Peter 1:3–8)

The church's task is not political. It is the proclamation of the Gospel of free salvation in the cross and resurrection of Jesus for all (1 Cor. 1:23; John 18:36). "The Church is the congregation of saints in which the Gospel is purely taught and the Sacraments are correctly administered" (AC VII 1).¹

God rules His church by His infallible Word, the Holy Scriptures (John 17:17; 2 Tim. 3:15–16). God rules the state by His eternal law, reason and reasonable laws for the common welfare. "Our churches teach that lawful civil regulations are good works of God" (AC XVI 1; see Rom. 13:1–7). The church should not meddle in government affairs, especially in matters upon which the Word of God is silent. It is also wrong when governments act against God's eternal law, reason and the basic civil rights of all people. The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution enshrines this truth. "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances."

Throughout history, governments have acted unjustly — sometimes in the name of race, atheism, communism, religion and even Christianity — and curtailed or denied the rights of conscience and the free exercise of religion. And governments continue to do so. Our Lutheran and biblical confession is that "it is necessary for Christians to be obedient to their rulers and laws. The only exception is when they are commanded to sin. Then they ought to obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29)" (AC XVI 6–7; see 1 Peter 2:13–14).

St. Paul made use of his legal right as a Roman citizen ("I appeal to Caesar" Acts 25:11). "Christ's kingdom allows us outwardly to use legitimate political ordinances of every nation in which we live, just as it allows us to use medicine or the art of building, or food, drink, and air" (Ap XVI 54). Our Lutheran Confessions commend the seeking of public remedy for injustice. "Public remedy, made through the office of the public official, is not condemned, but is commanded and is God's work, according to Paul (Romans 13)" (Ap XVI 59). Our God-given right to act as citizens is very important, especially now.

The Equality Act is before Congress.² It sounds innocent. All Americans should enjoy equality and the protections of the U.S. Constitution. But in elevating sexual orientation to a protected class, the Equality Act will bring sweeping changes to current laws, to the great detriment of the religious and constitutional freedoms of biblically faithful churches, institutions, Christian schools and individuals.

Jesus referred to Genesis 2:24, when He stated:

"Have you not read that he who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate." (Matt. 19:4–6)

In fact, those churches and institutions that are bound by the Word of God to the truth of marriage between a man and a woman, and that sex outside of that institution is contrary to the word of Christ and the apostles in the New Testament (1 Cor. 7:2), could be punished for simply standing on our consistent, ancient Christian beliefs. The Equality Act effectively outlaws the words of Christ, the sublime doctrine of Creation, the First Article of the Creed, and our "free exercise of religion" based upon the Bible and Apostles' Creed. The biblical teaching that marriage is between a man and a woman is to be labeled forever a mere "sex-based stereotype."³

The Equality Act expands the definition of “public accommodation” and puts an ultimatum to individuals, religious non-profits, food banks, schools, charities, adoption agencies and others: “Change your faith-based practices or face government punishment.”⁴

Religious schools (K-12 and universities) are a prime target of the Equality Act, which will make it difficult to maintain standards for admission and codes of Christian conduct for students, faculty and staff.⁵ The Equality Act will forbid college students from using federal tuition assistance at schools that maintain standards of conduct on the basis of the Bible regarding sexual orientation and gender identity.

Sex-specific facilities and female-only spaces could be eliminated. Biological males will have the right to participate in female sports, unjustly denying female athletes at our schools a fair competition and the due rewards of accomplishment.⁶

The Equality Act will eliminate the significant protections of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, passed by Congress and signed into law in 1993.⁷ This law has provided strong protections for “free exercise of religion” in the face of overzealous officials.

The Equality Act contains no conscience protections for medical staff who choose not to perform abortions, even if they have religious objections. Because of its broad definition of “health” services, the Equality Act threatens the Hyde Amendment, which limits public funding for abortion. It also threatens Christian hospitals with elimination of funding for not performing “health” services, including abortion or genital mutilation.

The Equality Act was recently passed by the House and is currently pending in the Senate. The margin is razor thin. If it does not become law now, we can be assured that it will be pressed again. We encourage all LCMS people to:

1. Treat all people with kindness and respect (“You shall love your neighbor as yourself” Mark 12:31), while holding firmly to “the faith once delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).
2. Become informed about the Equality Act and the issues of gender dysphoria. (See “Additional Resources” below.)
3. Consider your role as Christian citizens and make your voice known to your elected officials, particularly in the U.S. House (house.gov/representatives) and Senate (senate.gov/senators/index.htm).
4. Pray for our officials, government and the church in these challenging days.

Martin Luther once said, “Christ dwells only in sinners.” We recognize ourselves as sinners constantly in need of Christ’s forgiveness. We recognize the truth of the apostle Peter’s words, “For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God” (1 Peter 4:17). We know that Jesus’ opponents grumbled against Him by saying, “This man receives sinners and eats with them” (Luke 15:2). This comforting verse applies to us sinners, and we welcome all others to join us at the feet of Jesus, the sole Savior of all (John 3:16). As Christians, we believe that God has created all people, and all are infinitely valuable and accountable to Him. As Christian citizens, we recognize and demand basic God-given civil rights for all people, even as we insist on the First Amendment rights of Christians.

No matter the course of this or any legislation, Christ will sustain His church. Our hope is not in laws, Congress or courts. Our hope is Christ. “And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

Now who is there to harm you if you are zealous for what is good? But even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ

the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect, having a good conscience, so that, when you are slandered, those who revile your good behavior in Christ may be put to shame. For it is better to suffer for doing good, if that should be God's will, than for doing evil. (1 Peter 3:8–9, 13–17)

Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison
President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

ST. JOHN'S CHURCH COUNCIL MEETING

March 8, 2021

The March 8, 2021, meeting was called to order by President Dale Siegfried at 7:00 p.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Kara Grant, Kathy Carlson, Darrel Bahn, Tim Carlson, Dale Siegfried, Pastor James, Dick Heuton, David Ruhnke, Lori Siegfried, Patty Shatek and Donna Bailey.

OPENING PRAYER: Pastor Groleau

SECRETARY'S REPORT: M/S/P to accept the secretary's report for February 9, 2021, as written.

TREASURER'S REPORT: Net Operating Income: \$(4,345.80). Net Increase in Designated Funds: \$3,703.82. Net Loss \$(641.98). M/S/P to accept the Treasurer's report, as written.

ELDERS' REPORT:

Elders Board met on Monday March 1, 2021 at 630. All Elders and Pastor were present Opened with a LHM devotion and Bible study.

Pastor Gatluk Reat from the LCMS Sudanese ministry in southern Minnesota presented on his work Sudanese communities in Austin/Albert Lea, Faribault and Columbia Hgts, MN

Old Business: Ambassadors of Reconciliation continues with follow up sessions with individuals and small groups. We reviewed an updated Office Secretary's job description.

New Business: National Day of Prayer on Thursday May 6. Elders Board will assist Social Ministry in planning. To include 20 minute prayer vigils (9am - 12noon and 1-6pm) and a prayer worship service over the noon hour.

Nothing for Council action or approval.

Closing Prayers – personal petitions and The Lord's Prayer

TRUSTEES' REPORT:

Met, but no update report.

BOARD OF EDUCATION and YOUTH & FAMILY BOARD:

Tuesday, March 2, 5:30 p.m.

Present: Alisha Meyer, Patty Shatek, and Lori Siegfried.

Absent: Nicole Kramer

Both boards met briefly on Tuesday, February 16th to put together Sunday school packets for the Sunday school kids.

Both boards met again on Tuesday, March 2nd at 5:30 to discuss options for in-person Sunday school. After some discussion it was decided that we would try to return to in-person Sunday school on Sunday, April 11th and continue through Sunday, May 16th. This will be a six-week course with the following format:

Snack (purchased individual snacks such as goldfish crackers, fruit snacks, etc.)

Videos – from our church library with the themes of “Being Special”, “Being Truthful” and “Following the Rules”. Discussion to follow watching a portion of the video.

Craft

Prayer requests

Weekly bible verse

Outdoor activities when the weather is nice – such as the parachute.

This format will be presented at the Council meeting in March to make sure it is acceptable to proceed.

We also discussed giving Bibles to third graders and preschoolers as has been done in the past. The Pastor will be contacted regarding this and a list of children will be obtained as well as where to order the Bibles from if there are no Bibles left. We were thinking this could take place in May if that works for the Pastor.

Confirmation gifts will be purchased for the 7 confirmands. Patty will check at Main Street to see what is available as Lori checked at Hobby Lobby and the selection was very limited.

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 16th at 5:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Lori Siegfried

STEWARDSHIP BOARD:

The stewardship board met on March 3, with 2 members present.

The year 2022 offering envelopes arrived. They are stored in the NE Sunday School room. The bill has been received and paid.

The Scrip card distribution continues.

The Stewardship message for the monthly newsletter continues.

Respectfully submitted, Darrel Bahn

SOCIAL MINISTRY:

The Food Drive for Salvation Army is ongoing the month of March.

Confirmation will be Palm Sunday March 28th. We are going to have two services that day. The first will be regular Palm Sunday service at 9:00am and the second will be a repeat Palm Sunday Service with a Confirmation Service at 11:00 am. That is to accommodate more guests. The reception will be in the Fellowship Hall in between services from 10:00 – 10:50 am. This year's confirmands are Haylie Meyer, Zoe Kewatt, Faith Kalliokoski (From Our Savior - Brownsdale), Abigail VanPelt, Katherine VanPelt, Ryan VanPelt, and Blake VanPelt.

High School Graduation Reception will be held Sunday, May 16th after the 9:00 am service in fellowship hall. This year Ethan Grant is our only graduating high school senior.

National Day of Prayer is Thursday, May 6th. There will be signup sheet for 20-minute segments of time for prayer from 9:00 am – noon and 1:00 pm – 6:00 pm in the Chapel. Pastor will have a National Day of Prayer Service at noon in the Sanctuary.

EVANGELISM:

We will be having ads in the Herald and the Shopper notifying of Holy Week and Easter services.

We will be doing an outreach to CASE children and their families before Easter. We want them to know that we are thinking of them and we will be including an invitation to worship.

PASTOR'S REPORT:

COVID-19 Last month I reported it would still be some time before I could get into senior care facilities. That has changed. I have already been into some. The restrictions are lifting. Right now it looks like by the end of March I will be able to get in to all of them again. That is wonderful news! Though many have received their vaccine we will still have to maintain our protocols for social distancing in the sanctuary. Things are changing, slowly, but we can see normal returning.

Bible studies We have a few Bible studies going on and more planned for the near future. The Romans Bible study on Sunday morning has grown and there has been some great conversation. The problem has been with the streaming. I've learned that the audio especially has been getting harder to hear. That is in part a result of the distance the microphone is from everyone as we spread out. I'm exploring ways to correct that so that more can participate and perhaps contribute to the conversation.

Confirmation Sunday is Palm Sunday March 28. We will have seven being confirmed. Social Ministry is doing their best to accommodate a reception. Thank you for that! We will have an 11:00am Confirmation service to accommodate guests.

Lent/Easter of going well. This year we will have a Maundy Thursday and Good Friday service, but will not have a Holy Saturday. We are planning to bring back the 11am Praise service beginning on Easter Sunday. To ensure we do not over flow the sanctuary we are, like Christmas eve, asking people to sign up for services. If a service gets full, we'll add another one, but please sign up early. t service.

Attendance has continued to rise. A year ago I was in the sanctuary alone for worship services. Seeing the sanctuary filling up and hearing voices singing and participating in worship is wonderful.

OLD BUSINESS:

Drafts of a proposed Child Protection Policy, and the Sexual Harassment and Exploitation Policy have been approved by the insurance company. Upon approval by an attorney and review by the Boards of Youth and Family, and Education, and Elders, the policies will go to Council for formal adoption.

NEW BUSINESS:

The "Financial Oversight Committee" consisting of Dale Siegfried, President, and Richard Kiehne, Board of Elders, after applying various agreed-upon procedures, did not find any unsupported revenues, costs or balances in the financial records of St. John's Lutheran Church for the year ended 31 December 2020.

ADJOURNMENT: M/S/P to adjourn at 7:45 p.m.

CLOSING PRAYER:

Respectfully submitted: Donna Bailey, Council Secretary

St. John's Lutheran Church Financial Recap
January 1, 2021 through February 28, 2021

<u>Undesignated Assets</u>	<u>Balance 1/1/21</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>ince 2/28/2021</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Cash	\$432,709.04	\$275.92	\$432,984.96	Undesignated Assets represent the funds available for general operating purposes.
Prepays/Other Assets	16,216.78	(2,354.66)	13,862.12	
Buildings & Land	2,827,692.00	0.00	2,827,692.00	
Liabilities	(2,158.53)	(2,267.06)	(4,425.59)	
Net Operating Income (Loss)		<u>(\$4,345.80)</u>		
<u>Designated Assets</u>				
Building Fund	108,942.05	666.27	109,608.32	Designated Assets represent all of the various funds that for the designated purpose.
Needy Family Fund	1,167.08	0.00	1,167.08	
Women's Ministry Fund	1,923.46	0.00	1,923.46	
Musical Equipment Fund	283.68	0.00	283.68	
Library Books Fund	444.17	0.00	444.17	
Choir Robes Fund	3,111.00	0.00	3,111.00	
Memorial Fund	20,427.21	0.00	20,427.21	
Praise Band Fund	3,135.40	0.00	3,135.40	
Youth Fund	8,846.87	(57.44)	8,789.43	
Sumner School Fund	6,589.61	(811.55)	5,778.06	
undesignated	0.00	0.00	0.00	
Endowment Fund	40,989.08	3,906.54	44,895.62	
	<u>195,859.61</u>		<u>199,563.43</u>	
Increase (Decrease) in Designated Assets		<u>\$3,703.82</u>		
Net Income (Loss)		<u>(\$641.98)</u>		

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

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April, 2021

NEWSLETTER



ST. JOHN'S NEWS

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