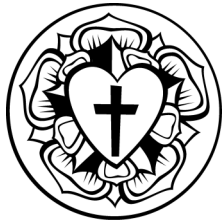


ST JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
3597 WEST MAIN STREET
PO BOX 5716
BELLEVILLE PA 17004

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

The Parish Messenger



St. John's Lutheran Church, Belleville, Pennsylvania

APRIL 2020



Jesus said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (John 8:12)

Rabbit says: "Hunker down, keep alert, keep safe.
There's light at the end of the tunnel."

With the extension of social distancing to April 31 and now a stay-at-home order for all counties in Pennsylvania, we know for sure we will continue to be hunkered down through Holy Week and beyond. Yet we are the church together wherever we may be. As a congregation we continue to worship God, support each other and serve the world. We praise our Creator for the renewal of the earth and the bright, uplifting signs of Spring. We thank the Holy Spirit for bringing us new ways to connect to each other and to God in these unusual times. We worship our friend and savior, Jesus Christ who brings us the renewal of hope for a meaningful and everlasting life. Let us live and share this Easter Joy.

Pastor Ela J. Robertson

Our Mission Statement

*We, the members of St. John's congregation,
promise to share the good news of Jesus Christ
and to love one another through worship and service*

St. John's Lutheran Church
3597 West Main Street
P.O. Box 5716
Belleville, PA 17004

9:30am Worship
10:45am Sunday School
September through May

Church Office ~ 935-2032
St. John's Christian Day Care and Preschool ~ 935-2959
E-mail us at stjohnco@embarqmail.com





Thank you to Sandra Metz for sharing this very funny, but for some, all-too-true picture. The caption stated “Sign of the Times”...who would have thought!

St. John's Lutheran Church

Pastor – Reverend Ela J. Robertson
Phone 740-338-7123
Sextons – Calvin and Kelly Byler
Church Secretary – Kelly Byler
Office Phone 935-2032
Email us at stjohnco@embarqmail.com

St. John's Christian Daycare and Preschool

Valerie McTavish, Director
Phone 717-935-2959

St. John's Congregational Council

	<u>Term Expires</u>
Ed Bilich ~ Treasurer	end of 2021
John Boring	end of 2020
Joy Byler ~ Vice President	end of 2022
Denise Chester	end of 2021
Deb French	end of 2022
Carol Fultz ~ President	end of 2020
Michele Harshbarger	end of 2020
Susan Lynch	end of 2022
Nancy Penepacker	end of 2022
Jami Zook ~ Secretary	end of 2022

St. John's Financial Report January 1 thru March 31

Checking account balance 1/1/20
\$ 16,763.74

Budget Report

Income \$ 51,168.00 Expense \$ 38,313.36
Net Income \$ 12,854.64

Parking Lot Donations YTD ~ \$ 3,950.00

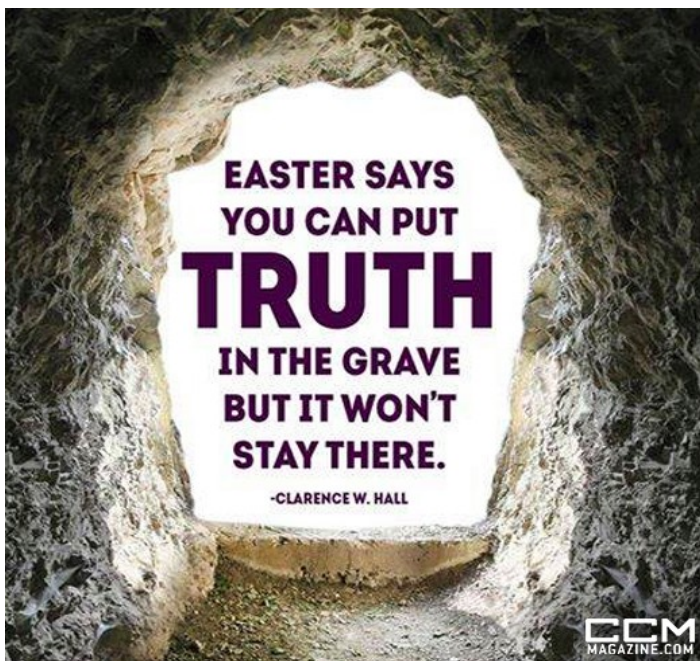
Daycare Financial Report January 1 thru March 31

Checking account balance 1/1/20
\$ 3,729.06

Budget Report

Income \$ 63,693.20 Expense \$ 60,597.19
Net Income \$ 3,096.01

It is strange how new and unexpected
conditions bring out unguessed ability to meet
them. ~ Edgar Rice Burroughs



Now that we will not be celebrating Easter in our church building, there is also no need for the lilies and other spring flowers which were used to decorate the sanctuary and narthex. So, with spring and warmer weather here, we will soon be planting flowers around the outside.

When we return to worship here, we may find ourselves celebrating Easter and other festival Sundays which follow all within a short period time.

There is a form included in this newsletter for anyone who would like to purchase geraniums in honor/memory of a loved one(s). An insert with the names of the persons placing them, along with those they are in honor or memory of will be included in the bulletin when we return as a church family to celebrate together.

Sunday 'curb-side' church

Last Sunday with the encouragement from Synod to seek creative ways to worship and with council's approval, I was able to visit many of our members who chose to welcome "curb-side church." Thank you to John and Brenda Boring who 'navigated' planning the route and calling ahead to each household so we could arrive at a safe distance on the yard or porch in most cases without even having to touch a door bell. With their guidance we reached over 20 people in less than two hours. Each 4-5 minute service included a greeting, hearing prayer concerns and praying for the individual, our congregation, their families and the world, then a blessing, a song and a postlude played by Pastor's husband on whistle.

It was both a solemn and joyful Sunday with many visibly touched. People expressed their thanks with words like "we really needed this," "it was a breath of fresh air," "thank you for the prayers and music."

While a majority responded 'yes' to the idea of curb-side church delivered at a safe distance others expressed their concern. Honoring their concerns I made plans to limit visits in the future to those who specifically ask or are in need. Now, with our county included in the state wide 'stay-at-home' order as of Wednesday April 1, it will be even more important for all to remain present with each other through all the other forms of communication we have available as we continue to worship God, support each other and pray for the world.

Pastor Ela

Pussy willows and herbs used in place of palms on Palm Sunday in Armenia.



COVID-19 is everywhere, in the newspapers, magazines, televisions, social media...basically wherever you look. Churches, especially pastor's are also inundated with information. Navigating through all of it can be tedious and tiring. The following pages contain information the pastor has determined to be beneficial to St. John's members.

FUNERALS

Both denominations have asked that we check in with our local funeral homes to see what policies they are adopting with regards to funeral gatherings and burials. I had a talk with April Henderson on Thursday, March 19. Like the rest of us she has had daily notices from her professional association about what precautions to take to protect both the public and themselves. These are the policies they currently have in place.

1. Social distancing -
2. Other than private family visitations, public viewings and funerals have been suspended. Memorials will be scheduled for a later date.
3. They have also suspended any unnecessary funeral planning meetings unless death is imminent.
4. Staffing, tasks and planning
5. The Funeral directors association has been in contact with its members and will meet next week to discuss how they can support each other, and be ready to step in to help perform preparations for burial if one of them is ill or quarantined, or over loaded so that the public in all their area will be served.
6. Preparations will not be limited to cremation
7. Embalming will continue to be performed
8. As research continues on the life span of a virus on surfaces and whether a deceased was affected by COVID-19 or not the same precautions will be taken in preparing for burial i.e. safety disposable clothing etc.
9. As much as possible, planning will handled by phone or on-line

The Church - I shared the Session's concerns for families who may lose loved ones in this time and that we are there to help out in any way we can within the constraints upon us all. I am always available to provide spiritual care, console and comfort and provide services in witness to the resurrection in whatever way we can.

Pastor Ela

Church Leader Call with PA Secretary of Health Dr. Levine on COVID-19 March 24, 2020

Summary

The religious community is part of life-sustaining services and plays a vital role in helping control this virus. Governor Wolf has not asked churches to close. Spiritual leaders are needed for their guidance and direction to their church members and the community.

The response from the state is three-fold:

1. Mitigation (Prevention)

Practicing cleanliness and social distancing (6 ft. of separation between people). The virus is spread through respiratory droplets. The most susceptible are the elderly and people with kidney or lung issues. Younger people are not immune. 40% of cases are under age fifteen. Small children are less likely to contract the virus.

2. Testing

This is being done through hospitals and independent labs.

3. Preparation of the Health Care System

Extra staff, beds, and supplies along with implementing emergency standards of care.

Questions and Answers

How can pastors and churches help the people of our Commonwealth?

We all have our role to play. As spiritual leaders, we need you working to help people in their spiritual life.

Are church meetings and gatherings like funerals or weddings prohibited?

The governor's order does not apply to religious events. Religious services are not prohibited. But the less people you have, the safer it will be.

Are church small groups allowed to meet and does social distancing actual work?

Social distancing does work – shown to work in other countries. The goal is to have less new cases. The fewer the people gathered, the safer we'll be.

Is a pastor permitted to live stream a church services from an empty church?

Yes. That's seems very prudent.

Can worship teams meet to record services or live stream?

Yes. Fewer people the better and take all the precautions necessary.

What about a church holding sunrise services or in parks?

Outside is better than inside. You have to keep social distancing. Again, the fewer the people, the better. Please understand that this is an emergency situation.

Is there any concern if your gathering is 10 or less?

Yes. Stay at home with immediate families as much as possible.

there less concern if your church is in a rural area vs urban?

No. I would do the best you can not to meet – rural or urban. The virus does not know urban vs rural areas.

Would you ever consider issuing an order for churches to shut down?

I do not see the Governor ordering it.

Is Are we expected to shut down pre-K schools?

There are some instructions on our website but overall, yes. There have been some exceptions for health care workers. Again, check out our website or the Center for Disease Control (CDC).

Is a church permitted to hold funeral services?

We're not going to prevent religious services, but the more social distances and fewer the people, the better. The more people congregate, the more they spread COVID-19. Yes, I understand that you need to do religious services. Do the best you can.

What should a church do in making deliveries of meals or health needs?

Leave it outside the door and you leave. Don't have direct contact with them.

Is there concern with spreading the virus through charitable donations?

Very little. It does survive on surfaces. Normal cleaning procedures would make it fine.

How long will this situation be?

I can't say. Right now, we're just on one side of it. Hopefully, as soon as possible we'll get on the other side of it. There needs to be a decrease in the rate of new cases in a sustained way.

Are there restrictions or precautions with any humanitarian efforts (Ex. Preparing meals)?

Try to make any aid efforts as remote as you possibly can. The more you can do things online, the safer it is. For food preparation, we want you to practice hand washing and all healthy preventative measures but yes, food prep is fine.

When will we see an end to the bans and restrictions?

When we see a continuous decrease in the cases. When there's a plateau and then a decrease in new cases, then we will be able to begin lifting some of the restrictions.

What are the best steps for decontamination in churches?

There are guidelines on their website or contact us. General idea is using bleach to clean areas where public has gathered.

Will mobile units be dispatched?

There are currently several mobile testing units in Philly and Pittsburgh.

What is the incubator stage of the virus – how long does it last?

The virus can last between 2-14 days. The average of 5 days.

Does this virus have a temporary season?

We don't know. It's a completely different family of a virus.

Will there be economic relief provided to those in my church family losing their job?

We can speak to the public health part of this crisis. There are other members working with the Governor on that area.

Are churches able to access personal protective equipment (PPE)?

Right now, PPE – masks, gowns, gloves – are only being made available for medical personnel. Given the anticipated surge, we need to save all those resources for health care personnel. For anyone involved in health care operations, take all precautions if you are seeing patients.

Closing remarks from the call

Thank you for your religious and spiritual guidance. People need you perhaps more than ever. Vision is a healthy Pennsylvania for all. Thank you for your service. Stay calm. Stay home. Stay safe.



Upper Susquehanna Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

Pastor Letter from Bishop Collins 3/30/20

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, greetings in the name of Christ.
An excerpt from this morning's devotion:

*Save me, O Lord, from my enemies; I have fled to you for refuge.
Teach me to do your will, for you are my God.
Let your good spirit lead me on a level path.
For your name's sake, O Lord, preserve my life.
In your righteousness bring me out of trouble. Psalm 143:9-11*

God our refuge, in times of distress and challenge you provide a safe place for your people to dwell. Keep us from all harm and teach us your will, guiding us in paths of righteousness. Amen.

Today marks another extension of the directive to "shelter at home" – this time, throughout the month of April. In many ways, this seems unfathomable. It's hard to wrap my brain around this and I worry how you all are doing in the midst of this total disruption of our norm. And just when I find myself slipping into that space of worry, I am reminded of the safe place that God has provided for us, spiritually and physically.

But...we can figure out something, together.

Are there not Biblical examples of communities coming together to meet the needs of the whole?

I want to share that there are steps being taken to seek financial resources to help various ministries. Churchwide is reaching out to specific entities to request financial assistance for synods and we are looking at our own synodical assets to see what funds are available to offer assistance to our congregations. We are also asking folks, as they are able, to continue to send offerings to their congregations either by mail or through the online giving app that some congregations have in place. As you consider your giving in these days, keep in mind that there will be members who won't have even a widow's mite to share.

All of these blessings and challenges remind me of a word that has been key in my ministry – RELATIONSHIPS. To trust in the relationship God has with us. To understand that we are in relationship with one another as the body of Christ. And to be present, as that body of Christ, in relationship to the world around us. Every day we have the opportunity to strengthen and build upon all of these relationships, even in and especially with this time of social distancing. This is a time to put aside our fears and worries and rest assured in these relationships.

Allow me to close with one more scripture reference:

Be still and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10

In these days, we are reminded to be still and rest assured that God is with us. As the church, let us also be good examples to our communities in practicing safe distancing while, at the same time, discovering new ways of being church together for the sake of our congregations and for the sake of our communities. May we all be safe while we all strive to be the church.

Shalom
Bishop Collins



St. John's Lutheran Church

P.O. Box 5716

3597 W. Main Street, Belleville, PA 17004

Study Phone: (717) 935-5997

Church Office: (717) 935-2032

The St. John's Council members understand that the current global outbreak of the coronavirus / COVID19 and the way it is spreading in the United States is increasing the level of anxiety felt by many of us. We know the level of anxiety is different for each of us. Some of the factors include: our background, our age, our current health, living alone or living with others, our communication with friends, and our security in knowing that someone is watching out for us and praying for us. We want you to know that your health, and the health of our community is of utmost concern to Pastor Ela, this council, and the staff of St. John's. We are doing our best to stay current with public health guidelines and the advice from our Synod, in responding to this situation. These guidelines seem to change every day and Pastor Ela has been staying current with the latest advice through video communication meetings and phone calls with Lutheran leaders, health department officials, meetings with other pastors, and weekly 'Zoom' meetings with the Bishop.

Because we need to stay home from worship and other events right now, we are introducing new ways we can stay in touch with each other:

- Our Good Shepherd List
- Expanded bulletin and newsletters
- Pastoral visits from the yard or porch
- Social media such as FaceBook, Emails and phone calls

We want to protect against situations where those who are ill also feel lonely or isolated. We want to pray for you and provide other forms of assistance and care as needed.

Let us all be faithful and vigilant in our prayers for our nation and those nations, communities, families and individuals most affected by this outbreak, and for the medical personnel and government officials seeking to respond. Let us resist and reject fear and suspicion based on ethnicity or nationality; this virus is affecting people of all races and ages. Let us be generous in supporting organizations that provide assistance and support public health in our area and around the world. Above all, let us remember and rejoice that ***"nothing in life or in death can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."*** (Rom. 8:38-39).

Our Good Shepherd list is attached. Each council member has been assigned a group of names allowing them to 'shepherd' a portion of our congregation. They will be checking in on you and do not hesitate to call them or Pastor Ela (740-338-7123) for anything you might need or just to chat or pray.

If you have other ideas for things we can do to address the personal needs of our congregation or our community, please don't hesitate to share them with Pastor Ela or one of the council members.

Stay safe and may God bless you!

St. John's Council

St. John's Good Shepherd List

Along with being the governing body of our church, St. John's council members have all become "Shepherds" to the members of our church family. Each one was assigned 5-6 individuals/families that they are responsible for. As your personal shepherd, they will be contacting you just to check in, relay important information, and offer their support and assistance, if needed. The following is a list of St. John's "Good Shepherd's" and those of our flock they are responsible for.

Ed Bilich ~ Nancy Aumiller, Ruth Baker, John and Brenda Boring, Ed and Marge Buchanan, Jim, Georgianna and Beth Ann Buchanan.

John Boring ~ Jay and Joy Byler, Paul and Linda Byler, Edna Chester, Jonathon and Megan Chester, John and Denise Chester and Matt Chester.

Joy Byler ~ Diddy Cleck, Carolyn Conner, Sharon Dancy, Deby French and Mady Conner, Gary and Esther Fultz and Jane Fultz.

Denise Chester ~ Ron and Carol Fultz, Erica Hargenrader and Gabe, Reba Harmon, Jimmy Harmon, Mike, Michele, Kyle and Anne Harshbarger.

Deb French ~ Randy Harshbarger, Ross and Sylvia Harshbarger, Sam Hassinger, Gwen Hornberger, Joe Kanagy, Bob and Susan Keller.

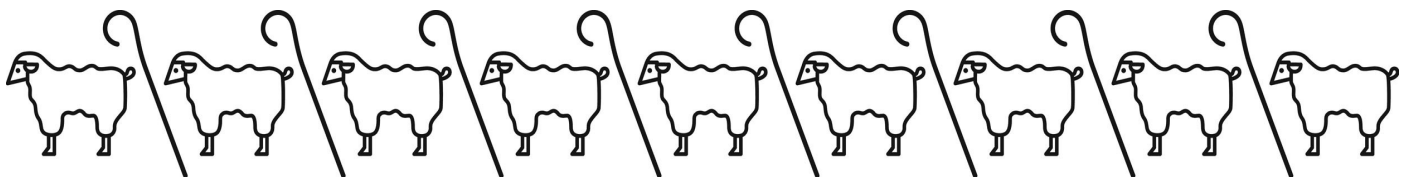
Carol Fultz ~ Sue Lynch, Lucy Magda, Carolyn Malone, Buck and Sandra Metz and Ralph Murphy.

Michele Harshbarger ~ Regina Peachey, Christine Peachey and Evan, Rick and Nancy Penepacker, Vivian Plank and Eleanore Rachau.

Sue Lynch ~ Chelsea Reed and Merritt, Dorie Remensnyder, Dick and Marge Shilling, Jed and Alice Smith, Don and Betty Smith.

Nancy Penepacker ~ Larry and Carol Stroup, Joyce Stuck, Steve and Ginger Wagner, Larry Walter and Rex Warner.

Jami Zook ~ Miriam Williamson, Don and Leoma Wolfe, Ken and Nancy Wyland, and Carol Yoder.



"Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood." Acts 20:8 (NIV)

Committees

Property Committee

The committee last met on March 16. While many of the projects they would like to work on have been put on hold for the time being, the following were recently completed.

- ◇ Don Smith and Jim Buchanan replaced the fan in men's restroom.
- ◇ Joe Kanagy and Mike Stroup replaced the roof on the north end of the fellowship hall. Thank you!

This church is an old and large building. The committee is never at a loss for things which need their attention. They welcome anyone who would like to help with the ongoing upkeep of our church.

Music and Worship

The committee met and made plans for inspiring Palm Sunday and Easter worship services. Two days later, those plans were put on hold, indefinitely. We look forward with anticipation to the future, when we can come together to worship and be uplifted as we celebrate the resurrection of our Lord.

Daycare

The total Giant A+ Rewards earned for the 2019/20 program is \$532.70. Thank you to everyone who supported us by shopping at Giant.

We want your stuff!!

Since we all find ourselves staying at home more during this time, many are taking advantage of the opportunity to clean-out and get rid of items we no longer use or want. If you are one of those people, **we want your stuff!!**

We will literally take anything in good usable condition, including furniture, but remember please **NO CLOTHING OR TV's.**

Donations can be placed on the stage or dropped off outside the church by the double red doors.

Once the decision to close the daycare was made, several of the girls came in and spent 3 days thoroughly cleaning/disinfecting each of the rooms, along with sanitizing all the toys and furniture.

We look forward to the day we can reopen the doors and welcome our children back.

Comfort Knotting



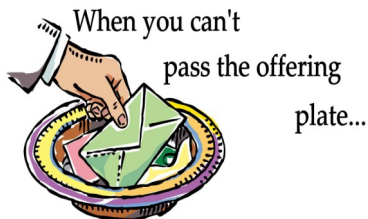
Our knotters, working and fellowshiping side by side on a Thursday morning...not so long ago. This group of women is so valuable to the ministry of our congregation. You do not need to travel to other countries to help care for God's people—the poor, sick and the afflicted. There is love and hope in each comfort they complete, from the first cut to the last stitch. We pray they will soon be able to meet again, sit side by side, and continue their mission.

IN OUR CHURCH AND COMMUNITY

At their March meeting, Council voted to direct this year's Lenten offering to our parking lot project. You can find an envelope for this special offering in your box for March 15.

For those of you who would like to continue blessing the church with your tithe, there are several ways to do that. It can be mailed to P.O. Box 5716 or if you find yourself like many, taking a drive just to get out the house, place it in the mail slot found in the door leading into the coatroom area off the narthex.

The office is still open, mail is being picked up, phone and email messages are also being checked frequently.



The church is applying for a \$500 matching grant from the ELCA World Hunger's Daily Bread Matching Grants. Program. If approved this will allow us to help provide food for our daycare /other families within the community affected by the COVID 19 Crisis.

We will keep you informed as information on this effort is made available to us.

Thank you to everyone who donated to Camp Mount Luther during the recent "Raise the Region" campaign. The donations of \$250.00 were matched, and a total of \$500 was received by the camp from St. John's.



Please help us keep our information up to date. If you are now using a cell phone instead of a land-line, changed your phone/cell number, email or home address, let us know.

A Note from the Big Valley Ministerium:

Doug Pierce with the full support of the Big Valley Ministerium is **deciding to cancel Time of Caring for this year.**

In place of this, perhaps we as individual congregations can be attentive to people in and surrounding our church who may need assistance this spring.

God bless you as you continue to serve in creative ways over the next weeks.

Pastor Ela has placed CD's containing a narrative version of the Old Testament, along with an audio recording of the Camp Mt. Luther Prayer Service in the office for anyone who would like to listen to them. Please call or stop in if you are interested.

For those of you who use the monthly devotionals provided by the church, we will gladly mail them out to you. Christ in Our Home and The Word In Season booklets run quarterly, so the copies we currently have available begin with April.

The Upper Room devotionals are bi-monthly. We still have copies for March/April and will be receiving May/June within the next few weeks. These come in regular and large print.

Since the state is now under the governor's *Stay at Home Order*, many of you will not be leaving home unless it is absolutely necessary, and there is also no certainty that this will not continue into May.

So, if you would like to have any of these devotionals mailed to you, please email or call the church office, and let a message if no one is here. We will make sure you receive one.



St. John's Geranium's



*There is no set price for the geraniums.
They will be planted around the outside
of the church and Fellowship Hall.*

*An insert with the names of the persons
placing them, along with those they are in
honor/memory of will be included in the
bulletin when we return as a church
family to celebrate together.*

In memory of

In honor of

Given by

**Please return this form along
with your donation to the church.**