

# St. John's News

February, 2021



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St. John's Webpage:

[www.stjohnsaustincms.org](http://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](http://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

It's a new year and we're well on our way into it. COVID craziness is still around. There is a light at the end of the COVID tunnel, but we don't know how long that tunnel is. ...but there is a light. There is a foreseeable end to COVID's affect. When COVID is done the world will need some time to heal. So will the USA, Minnesota, and St. John's.

When COVID's affect is done we will all come back to smaller churches. All churches across America will experience that. The series of articles I gave you in newsletters last year pointed out a declining church that statistics projected will, by 2030, be a small fraction of what it once was. COVID has only accelerated that.

It is easy to get into a habit of not doing something, like going to church. It's harder to establish, or reestablish, the habit of good things, like going to church. A number of you have shared with me how much you miss church, and how much you want to be back, but have concerns about COVID for your own health. Those are real, serious, and legitimate concerns. As COVID ends, the time to come back is approaching. Be patient, but come back.

Others may have become comfortable with joining church in your jammies and a warm beverage in your comfy chair. It is wonderful that St. John's had the infrastructure

already in place to bring church into your home. COVID came quickly and some churches were deeply affected. Some have still not reopened their doors. Remote church is okay. You hear God's Word, but it's not like being there. Hebrews 10 (the chapter of introduction to the great faith of the Bible, chapter 11) teaches us:

Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another,... [Hebrews 10:24-25]

As things begin rolling back to normal let me encourage you to come back to church. Join your church family in hearing God's Holy Word. As we come back there will be changes. The "old normal" will have to give way to some things that are "new-normal."

Robert Frost wrote a poem which abbreviated says:

Two roads diverged in the  
wood,  
And sorry I could not travel  
both  
long I stood.

...

Two roads diverged in a wood,  
and I took the one less  
traveled.  
And that has made all the  
difference.

(The Road Not Taken by  
Robert Frost)

There are two roads that come out of this situation. Both hold uncertainty and risk. Many will chose the well traveled path, resorting to what has been done

in the past as the answer for what the future holds. Other will cut a new path, taking the road less traveled. The Church in America has been fading away for decades. The old way has not been working for a very long time. We need to walk a new path.

What if, buried in this crisis and uncertainty, we find awesome opportunity for accelerating a movement of the Gospel? Scripture says:

We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do. *[Ephesians 2:10]*

COVID has made introverts of many congregations. Churches are not reaching out to reach those who do not know Jesus. How do we come out of this? How will St. John's prosper and grow coming out of COVID? Here are four things we can do, and should do, as soon as possible.

1. Acknowledge that this has been a long haul and we'll need some time to regroup. Before COVID we were talking about more congregational events. Things like: potlucks, movies, family fun nights, and the like. We should get those up and running as soon as we can.

2. St. John's has had the infrastructure for Distance-Worship for some time. It will be helpful to explore how we can make that experience more enjoyable and easily accessible. It will also help to find ways to personally engage those joining us by radio or Internet. Our efforts right now are primarily a one-way street. We talk, they listen. Before COVID I was having conversations with Lutheran Hour Ministries about how to make that a two-way street. We need to explore the creation of an engaging service that is more than watching TV or listening to the radio.

3. Missional gatherings are going to be the vehicle which brings people into our church. What are those? They can be just about anything that engages people in interests through which we build friendships. It can be sewing, quilting classes or cooking classes. It could be watching a movie series like "The Chosen" and having a discussion. It might be "Garage Church," which is a unique concept that is really more like a casual Bible study, or watching the worship service remotely with friends who may not feel comfortable walking into the building. It is distributed gatherings of the church outside the church building. It is done by members that will extend invitations to their patio or into their living room, which can happen long before extending an invitation into the sanctuary.

4. Relational Discipleship. The path toward a growing church is not marketing, a program or a procedure. There are no "10 easy step" to growing a church. We need to watch Jesus, listen to Jesus, imitate Jesus. Jesus disciplined people by teaching them to emulate Him. He did that by building relationships. He said:

This is My commandment,  
that you love one another as I have loved you.  
*[John 15:12]*

His disciples then taught people to emulate them.

Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.  
*[1 Corinthians 11:1]*

That process has been carried on through the generations. It was always around building a relationship that fostered and encouraged conversation.

Another change churches will have to wrestle out is the worry that a shrinking church sometimes feels. All churches in America will come back smaller after COVID. We might feel that concern, wondering how, or if, our church will survive. If we are going to survive, or better prosper and grow, we need to grow away from "Please stay!" to "Please go!" What could I mean by that? Three words: **desperation, invitation, and multiplication.**

“Please stay!” – Is an act of **desperation**. It means we’ll take anyone just to have good numbers. We won’t care what they believe or how they act. We just want to have a good head count so we’ll tolerate anything as long as they’ll claim they are Christian.

“Please come!” – Is the next step. It is an **invitation** to come and share the peace that surpasses all understanding. (*Philippians 4:7*) It is St. John’s joining the community around us and contributing to it as we share where we get our peace and what drives us to help. Here we loose the platitudes and share our peace in the Prince of Peace. We do that first through action and deed. Then through words and the Word.

“Please go!” – This is our goal, but don’t misunderstand! We’re not kicking people out! This is **multiplication**. It is when we help grow a new congregation that can develop and prosper. Larger churches have genuine struggles when it comes to offering personal care. The better model is a number of small gatherings, each one focused on a particular aspect of the greater ministry and needs of the community. A church helping other churches to grow, or starting new churches, is a truly prosperous church.

This is all about being Kingdom focused. Our focus on God’s Kingdom, not our little fiefdom. It is about saving souls one at a time by caring about souls. All of this all begins with prayer.

The effective prayer of a righteous person has great power. [*James 5:16*]

As we work and engage in the community around us we faithfully trust in God to change hearts. Our prayers to God can come from God. Using His Word to guide our prayer. Psalm 78 is a good place to start:

Give ear, O my people, to my teaching; incline your ears to the words of my mouth! I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter deep sayings from of old, things that we have heard and known, that our fathers have told us. We will not hide them from the children, but tell to the coming generation the glorious deeds of the Lord, and His might, and the wonders that He has done. [*Psalm 78:1-4*]

The end of COVID is the beginning of opportunity.

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

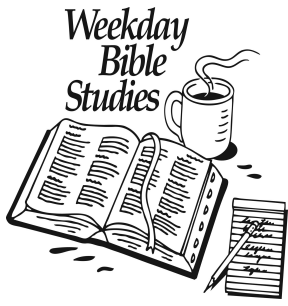
### Ruby’s Pantry in Austin

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](mailto:goodnews@rubyspantry.org)      [www.rubyspantry.org](http://www.rubyspantry.org)

Bob Rosel, Media Coordinator Ruby's Pantry Austin

## 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 at 5:00 p.m. **Men's Bible Study** - Thursdays at 5:00 - Jesus...Legend or Lord? Jesus is one of the most written about and debated figures in the world. In this eight-part video series, best-selling author and scholar Dr. Paul Maier explores a three-lane highway to the past through the disciplines of Archeology, History, and Geography. Along the journey, we look back to the world that Jesus himself saw as he moved toward the cross. Jump in and join us when you can. - 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](mailto:Miriam.Luehmann@icloud.com)

## Stewardship

**Luke 8:5** – “And as he sowed, some fell along the path and was trampled underfoot. . .” Know any farmers like this? Who just throw their crop seed wherever? That's crazy! But God's ways are not our ways – He is generous beyond compare! He delights in giving. As we are more and more conformed to His image, may we also learn the joy of generosity and giving!

## Radio Broadcast

Dear fellow Members of St. Johns,

Thank you to those that have called and sent in money in support of the radio Broadcast. Toward the end of April, we have a lot of opening over the next months. I will update again in March. Please keep the Radio Broadcast in your prayers. We are thankful to be able to continue this ministry because of your 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 5<sup>th</sup> AVE SW, Austin, MN 55912. The weekly fee is \$150.00 you can donate the total amount or any part of the amount.

Jan. 24, 2021 Sponsored by Vance and Ruth Oelkers in thankfulness to God for St. John's and for Pastor Groleau, Kerri and family.

Jan. 31, 2021 Sponsored by Pastor and Donna Bailey to the Glory of God!

Feb. 7, 2021 Sponsored by an anonymous donor to the Glory of God.

Feb. 14, 2021 Given in memory of Dalvin Augustin and in thankfulness to God for Janet's birthday she will celebrate Feb.22 by Janet Augustin and family and friends.

Feb. 21, 2021 Sponsored by Randy and Doraine Graff in thankfulness to God for their children, Amber, Jesse & Henry Collins and Nathan Graff.

Feb. 28, 2021 Sponsored by Paul Schulz in memory of Allen Schulz.

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

## February Birthdays for Shut-Ins

|    |                  |
|----|------------------|
| 22 | Janet Augustin   |
| 22 | Grace VanProosdy |



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

## Social Ministry

The November food drive collected 450 pounds of food for Austin Salvation Army. Thanks to everyone who contributed to this ministry to our neighbors in Austin.

**2020 Contribution Statements** are now available on the East table in the Sanctuary

Consider sending a **Valentine Card to our shut-ins**. They have been isolated for almost a year and need to know their church cares about them. There are address labels on the table on the east side of the sanctuary.

### **Ambassadors of Reconciliation**

What a wonderful ministry to the Church. We had excellent participation in the Bible study. At first glance that may all look like stuff we've seen before, but letting the Word and the Holy Spirit speak those old words brings new comfort. I would encourage you to participate in this as much as possible. This is profound material for more than just here. These things can apply to many aspects and relationships in life.

Even if cost is your only driving factor, don't waste this. The cost was substantial and we cannot waste or fritter away this opportunity. The cost to not be engaged in this is beyond price, and of eternal consequences.

Above all else be involved in prayer. James 5:16 states: "Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous person has great power." As repentant, Baptized, children of God you are a righteous person in His sight.

May God bless our work.

Pastor James.

### **From the Library**

Christine finds herself in a pickle. Her grandfather has died leaving her totally alone without any family except his housekeeper who has been like a mother to her. Grandfather's will has been read and it is puzzling with questions she can't answer. She receives an unsigned note telling her to meet a man she doesn't know. Should she go or shouldn't she? She decides she better go. Through a mishap she meets the Cameron family. She learns how this family is different from others she has known by putting their faith into action.



This story takes place in Wisconsin in the 1880's. ***A Place Called Home*** by Lori Wick is a compelling story and a fast read. You will find this enjoyable book in our church library.

Annette Kiehne

**St. John's Lutheran Church Financial Recap**  
**January 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020**

| <b>Undesignated Assets</b>                      | <b>Balance 1/1/20</b> | <b>Activity</b>                    | <b>ince 12/31/2020</b> | <b>Notes</b>  |
|---|-----------------------|------------------------------------|------------------------|---|
| Cash  | \$199,243.26          | \$233,465.78                       | \$432,709.04           | Undesignated Assets represent the funds available for general operating purposes.                           |
| Prepays/Other Assets                            | 13,831.09             | 2,385.69                           | 16,216.78              |   |
| Buildings & Land                                | 3,096,411.00          | (268,719.00)                       | 2,827,692.00           |   |
| Liabilities                                     | (5,139.68)            | 2,980.96                           | (2,158.72)             |   |
| <b>Net Operating Income (Loss)</b>              |                       | <b><u>(\$29,886.57)</u></b>        |                        |   |
| <br><b>Designated Assets</b>                    |                       |                                    |                        |   |
| Building Fund                                   | 107,467.19            | 1,474.86                           | 108,942.05             | 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                | 50.00                              | 444.17                 |   |
| 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>195,859.61</u>      |   |
| <b>Increase (Decrease) in Designated Assets</b> |                       | <b><u>(\$9,235.79)</u></b>         |                        |   |
| <b>Net Income (Loss)</b>                        |                       | <b><u><u>(\$39,122.36)</u></u></b> |                        |   |

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

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**February, 2021**

**NEWSLETTER**



# ST. JOHN'S NEWS

Return Service Requested

