

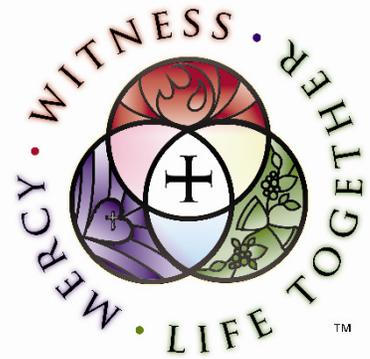
ST. JOHN LUTHERAN CHURCH

16035 County Road U

Napoleon, Ohio 43545

Church: (419) 598-8961

School: (419) 598-8702



News & Notes

March 29, 2020

During these unusual days of pandemic, we will not be preparing the regular church bulletin, but will instead make this '*News & Notes*' page available weekly on the website. In addition, paper copies of this page will be available on Tuesdays outside the church office for anyone coming in to drop off an offering.



CONGREGATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS – Be sure to stay up to date by watching our webpage, SJL.ORG, and our Facebook Page. These will be a primary means by which we will provide information to the congregation. On the webpage there will be links to connect you to our live-streamed and archived worship services, as well as other information.

A document is available on our website titled, “**Sustaining Ministry During COVID-19,**” with all the information you need to follow everything we’re trying to do at St. John.

ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICES – Videos of our online services will be made available at about the same time we would have gathered for public worship – Sundays at 9:00 a.m. and weekday evening services (Wednesdays and Holy Week) at 7:00 p.m. Many thanks to our online team, Dan Wachtman, Renee Petzoldt and Sharon Damman.

OFFERINGS DURING THIS TIME – The gifts of God’s people are essential to the continuation of ministry. There are three ways we suggest giving your gifts during this time especially...

- Use our new ‘**Give Now**’ online giving page – a link is on our website
- Mail your offerings to the church
- Drop off your offerings on Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to noon, outside the church office

More detailed information is available on the “Sustaining Ministry” document online.

WHEN WILL PUBLIC WORSHIP AND HOLY COMMUNION RESUME? This is the million dollar question. The council and elders decided to suspend worship through Palm Sunday, but that will likely need to be extended. Stay tuned to all channels of communication, and we’ll get the word out as soon as we can.

The question of Holy Communion is vexing for us as Christians who cherish regular reception of the gift of Christ’s body and blood for the strengthening of faith. I have attached a special page to this edition of News & Notes to address the question further.



MATTERS FOR PRAYER – Please keep these people in your prayers:

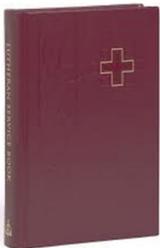
- ❖ Shut-Ins: *Norma Damman, Renetta Homan, and Lester Rabe*
- ❖ *Dorothy Gerken, Melba Elling, and Lorna Von Deylen*, at Genacross Lutheran Home
- ❖ *Evelyn Rohrs and Arlene Gerken*, at Assisted Living – Genacross Lutheran Home
- ❖ *Harold Behrmann*, at Fulton Manor – Wauseon
- ❖ *Donald Landry*, residing at the Ohio Veteran’s Home, Sandusky
- ❖ Armed Services: *Justin Atkinson, Jason Rohrs, Emily Schroeder, Connor Gerken, Seth Handy*
- ❖ *Willie Joost*, recovering well from skin graft surgery for burns on his leg
- ❖ *Dale VonDeylen*, brother of Deb Durham and Dave VonDeylen, who is undergoing tests for cancer at the OSU hospital

BIRTHING NEWS: Congratulations to *Jason & Andrea (Badenhop) Oyer* on the “safe and healthy” arrival of a daughter, **Hendrix Jo Oyer** on Tues., March 17th. They are all home and enjoying their time together and adjusting to life as a family of 6 in the midst of the coronavirus quarantine. Grandparents, Kathy Badenhop and Glenn Badenhop are sure to be first in line for hugs...when they are allowed again! Congrats to the Oyers!

| <u>FINANCIAL FACTS:</u> | Home Fund | Synod & Missions | Building Fund |
|--------------------------------|------------|------------------|---------------|
| Weekly Need | \$9,792.78 | \$500.00 | \$961.54 |
| Rec’d 03/22/20 | \$2,215.00 | \$55.00 | \$75.00 |

ATTENDANCE: 0

5TH LENTEN SERVICE: Live-streamed due to Covid-19 pandemic



CPH SALE – THE LUTHERAN SERVICE BOOK (LSB) – This may be the time to purchase a copy of the hymnal for home use, so that you can use it in your household for following our online services, as well as all of its wonderful devotional resources. **They are on sale right now at CPH.org for \$20.** Just Google ‘**cph lsb**’ and click the first link.

If you’re really thrifty, you can sometimes find used copies of LSB, like the one on thriftbooks.com for \$15.

PORTALS OF PRAYER BOOKLETS for the next quarter, *April, May, June*, are available on the table outside the school office and on the desk in the narthex. There are also large print booklets available for anybody to pick up.

APRIL PRAYER & BIRTHDAY CALENDAR is attached also. The Bible readings in April will cover the books of 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John, Jude, and Revelation.



HOLY COMMUNION AND COVID-19

Recently our church's *Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR)* released a document offering guidance to congregations on the matter of Holy Communion during this time of pandemic. A copy of this document is available from a link on our SJL.ORG website under the *Coronavirus Response* tab. Here are some of the highlights.

- This time of suspended worship services is a significant challenge for Christian life and for the church's well-being. Christians treasure God's Word and the Sacrament of the Altar as vital parts of their spiritual lives.
- As far as the preaching of the Word, churches are finding ways to keep the Gospel's voice alive through technology and the internet, although this is far from ideal. But what of the Sacrament of the Altar? While the forgiveness of sins is not withheld when we cannot commune, it is only in the Lord's Supper that we eat and drink the very body and blood of Christ. The Sacrament thereby offers us a special assurance. The inability to commune is therefore no small matter, but a true hardship!
- This hardship, however, is not totally unique to these times. During the years of colonial America, when pastors were in short supply, Lutherans often went weeks or even months without the Lord's Supper. During the great influenza epidemic of 1918-19, many LC-MS churches were not able to meet for any services for long periods of time. We are not in uncharted territory.
- We need to avoid many of the unsatisfactory solutions to this problem that have been suggested at this present time.

One is for the pastor to speak Christ's *Words of Institution* during a live streamed service while everyone communes at home.

Another is to have the pastor consecrate the elements in the presence of the elders who would in turn take them out to the members.

The *CTCR* points out that Jesus instituted the Sacrament in the direct presence of His disciples, and that the church throughout history has always sought to remain faithful to this practice. Whenever the words and actions of the celebrant in consecrating the elements are intentionally separated (by time, distance, or technological means) from the distribution and reception, no assurance can be given that our Lord's instructions are being heeded and that the body and blood of Christ are actually being given and received for the forgiveness of sins and the strengthening of faith. This creates only uncertainty.

Also, these approaches turn the Words of Institution from a proclamation into an incantation of sorts, a kind of magical formula. The *CTCR* quotes the *Formula of Concord*, "Concerning the consecration (of the Communion elements), we believe, teach, and confess that no man's work nor the recitation of the minister effect this presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper, but it is to be ascribed solely and alone to the almighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Continues...



Novel approaches to Holy Communion such as these inevitably lead us away from the Sacrament as instituted by Christ to humanly-instituted techniques by which the Sacrament is purportedly given. The *CTCR* said in 2006, “the focus in our celebration of the Lord’s Supper must always be on the gracious word of Christ—the word that gives assurance to hearts weighed down by guilt, doubt and fear that the great gifts promised here are truly given and received. To...insert some personal idiosyncrasy into the consecration is to detract the people’s attention from the Sacrament.”

- As great as the hardship is that we cannot receive Christ’s body and blood for the time being, this hardship ought not be “resolved” in ways that introduce uncertainty into the “sacrament.” It is better to humbly and repentantly implore God to restore the Sacrament to us soon, as well as to end this deadly pestilence that is killing thousands of souls who are so precious to God, their Creator.
- In these uncertain times, let’s encourage every baptized child of God to be fervent in seeking opportunities to hear the Word of God as it goes forth from online sermons, devotions, websites, emails and other means. Let’s implore God to preserve His church that the Gospel may continue to be proclaimed.

A PERSONAL NOTE FROM THE PASTOR

In times past I know that I have not always or fully appreciated the Sacrament of Holy Communion and our fellowship around the altar. It is because of our fallen nature that we often fail to appreciate the most precious gifts of life. These days of “fasting” from the Lord’s Supper are having the effect upon me of increasing my hunger and thirst for this priceless gift of Christ, His very body and blood. Likewise, our time of separation as the congregation of His people only heightens my desire to be assembled with you again.

I for one cannot wait for the day when we kneel together again in the blessed fellowship of the altar to eat and drink together the fruits of Christ’s cross. I pray that I will remember the lessons God is teaching me through this experience, and that I will never again take His gifts lightly or for granted.

**O Jesus, blesséd Lord, to Thee
My heartfelt thanks forever be,
Who hast so lovingly bestowed
On me Thy body and Thy blood.** LSB 632:1