

**Pew News**  
**St. John's Lutheran Church**  
**April 2020**

**Practicing For the Big Day!**

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:1-2

Imagine growing up knowing that you had been born to die. That's Jesus. He was born so that he could die for the sins of the world. And he knew it. Repeatedly in God's Word the apostles remark that Jesus taught as one who had authority. Even as a twelve year old people were astonished at his understanding (Luke 2:47). He knew.

Jesus knew as he began his ministry. He is baptized for you. He is tempted for you. Everything he does is for

you. Finally, he will set his face to go to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). He knew he must go there to suffer for you. He knew he must go there to die for you. That's why he keeps telling his disciples, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised." (Luke 9:22) He knew.

Why then did Jesus go? The author of Hebrews tells us, "Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross." Jesus endures all of it. A life of knowing that ultimately he would lay his life down. The pain and suffering of crucifixion. Jesus endures all of it for the joy that was set before him. Jesus endures all of it because he knows it will give us the forgiveness of sins and eternal life. In other words, "Who for the joy of seeing me in heaven one day endured the cross . . ." Jesus endured it all for me!

The current crisis enveloping our world and our town will require great sacrifice from all of us. Life as usual is gone. We can't worship like we prefer. We can't travel or spend time with our family. We can't go to the movies or our favorite restaurant. In some cases we can't go to work and we may lose our job, our income and our insurance.

We embrace these sacrifices for two important reasons. First, because the authorities that God has given to us to be a blessing in our lives have asked us too. These authorities include both the federal and state government as well as the CDC and Virginia Department of Health. God's will (Fourth Commandment) is that we honor the authorities in our lives and in following God's will we know peace and joy. Second, we embrace these sacrifices out of love for our neighbor. God's will (Fifth Commandment) is that we not hurt or harm our neighbor in his body. Since we don't know if we're carrying the virus love for our neighbor requires that we isolate ourselves. So we embrace sacrifice.

But read Hebrews 12:1-2 again. The author encourages us to run this race with endurance. To carry this cross. To endure this sacrifice looking to Jesus. Look to Jesus, who for the joy of seeing you in heaven endured the cross. Look to Jesus and celebrate the forgiveness of your sins every day. Look to Jesus and celebrate your new life in him every day.

If we keep our eyes on Jesus we too can run like Jesus, who for the joy that was set before him ran. Run looking forward to the day when we can worship together again. Run looking

forward to the day when you will see Jesus face to face. Run because you have already won. When people ask you why you're willing to sacrifice tell them about the joy set before you. The joy of rising to new life every day! The joy that will be ours when we gather together again to celebrate the resurrection in our sanctuary! The joy that will be ours when we see the face of Jesus in heaven!

God's Peace,

Pastor Matt Sorenson

### **Lives of Worship**

Our mission is all about worship. "Experiencing and sharing the love of Jesus Christ." Worship is first about receiving God's gifts and then about sharing those gifts. The COVID-19 crisis has changed so many aspects of how we worship. I want to encourage you to be people of worship particularly in this crisis. Rather than binge watching every episode of Gilligan's Island because you can't go out how about committing yourself to spending more time in God's word?

I would be glad to help you find a resource (print or electronic) to suite your needs. Please contact me

at [pastor@stjohnsfarmville.org](mailto:pastor@stjohnsfarmville.org) or 434-392-1875. You could also join any of the three Bible studies currently in progress. Each of them are being held online in a virtual space.

But what about our worship services? Our worship services also continue online in a virtual space. It appears that this will be the new normal for some period of time. We are doing everything we can to make this easy and inviting for as many as possible. We will continue to offer all of our worship services in this space until the threat from COVID-19 passes. It looks like this will include Holy Week and the Resurrection of Our Lord.

Let me offer you this hope. It is our intention to celebrate the Resurrection of Our Lord the first Sunday that we can all gather back in the sanctuary. We will have a sunrise service, an Easter breakfast and all of the trappings that go along with Easter. In a very real sense each of us will be rising to new life along with Jesus!

But until that day it is important that we continue to gather around Word and Sacrament. Please plan on joining us in our virtual worship space for each of our services. If you have any trouble please contact me in the office so that I can help you get connected. If there is a change that we can make so that the online experience is easier or better we'd like to hear about that. We will send out an email with the link to use to get into worship and Bible study. But those links are also available on our website ([stjohnsfarmville.org](http://stjohnsfarmville.org)).

If you are unable to connect to the virtual worship space we also provide a recording of the sermon on Facebook and our website. For those who do not have access to email or a computer we will provide updates and correspondence through the mail.

Pastor Sorenson is available to give Holy Communion to individuals, couples and families Monday through Thursday from 10 - 1. If those times don't work then please send him an email to set up a different time. If you would like a visit for any reason please contact me so that we can set up a time.

Please continue to send us prayer requests and let me know if they're urgent and need to go out immediately or if they are to be included on Sunday. Remember that you should always have the individual's permission to share their name. Finally let us know how you are doing and how we can help.

## **Helping Neighbors During this Crisis**

We're here to love and serve our neighbors. Please take time to look around you and intentionally love your neighbor. During this time of social distancing there is so much fear and loneliness. Take time just to stop and say hello and ask if your neighbor needs anything. Please let the Church know if you need help in any way.

Chuck Ironmonger and Blake Phillips have both offered to go shopping for anyone who doesn't feel comfortable going out. In addition, Walmart is open every Tuesday from 6 - 7 for shoppers 60 years and older ONLY.

## **Applying Bible Principles**

A Christian business owner once observed, "I would rather do business with a non-Christian any day than with a Christian." His statement was a descriptive commentary on a sad state in the lives of some Christians who fail to pay their bills or to deal with their debts as promised.

A debt simply represents a promise to pay. Nothing more. Nothing less. Whether the debt is to purchase a car, a house, braces for the kids' teeth, or to facilitate a purchase by using a credit card, the issue is the same. By creating a debt, we also create simultaneously an obligation and promise to pay.

Larry Burkett wrote this, "Probably forty percent of all American families are in debt in a typical year. They're unable to make the monthly payments on the money they borrowed. Many actually borrow more money to make payments on the money they've already borrowed."

We who are Christians — of all people — should pay our debts, not only for our reputations and personal integrity, but also because what we do is a direct reflection on our Lord. Or as the Apostle Paul expressed it so clearly in 1 Thessalonians 4:12, we are to walk honestly towards people who are outside the family of God so that our daily lives may win their respect.

Psalms 37:21 says that to borrow (to create a debt) and then not repay it is wrong. But on a positive note, this same verse also says that the person who is righteous shows mercy by repaying debts and by giving to the needs of others.

By the way, do people know you're a Christian by how you pay your bills and by how you give to others?

## **Holy Week & Easter Sunday**

It is becoming increasingly clear that we won't be able to gather publicly during Holy Week. Please take time to remember your Lord's suffering and death on your behalf and then celebrate your resurrection to new life. If you can join us online to do that we'd love to see you. If that's not possible then take time on your own with the Lord.

**Palm Sunday - April 5th**

**Maundy Thursday - April 9th**

**Good Friday - April 10th**

**The Resurrection of Our Lord - April 12th**

## **Martin Luther's Thoughts on Living and Serving During the Plague**

When the plague enveloped Wittenberg in 1527, Luther gave great advice: Take care of yourself, then as you can in your vocation and are able, care for others. (The situations of the

bacterial plague in Luther's day and today's viral pandemic are not completely parallel, so his determination in the passage below to "go freely" would be nuanced for pastors.) Luther continues:

Use medicine; take potions which can help you; fumigate house, yard, and street; shun persons and places wherever your neighbor does not need your presence or has recovered, and act like a man who wants to help put out the burning city. What else is the epidemic but a fire which instead of consuming wood and straw devours life and body? You ought to think this way: "Very well, by God's decree the enemy has sent us poison and deadly offal. Therefore I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely. ...See, this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God.

**Treasurer's Report for Feb 2020**

	<b>Feb - 2020</b>
<b>Total Collections &amp; Savings</b>	<b>US\$18,141.17</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>US\$17,865.12</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>US\$276.05</b>
<b>Total Savings Used</b>	<b>US\$2,000.00</b>
<b>MOM Mission Match</b>	<b>US\$2.50</b>
<b>Add Mortgage Principal</b>	<b>US\$1307.63</b>

**How can I continue to support St John's if we're not having services?**

During this time of uncertainty due to the Corona-19 Virus, please continue to remember your church family in your thoughts and prayers. Also as the work of our church goes on, so do its monthly expenses. Offerings by check may be mailed to the church. Another option is the electronic giving program, Joyful Response (form attached).

You may set up any amount you wish at any frequency, even a one time donation. No fees for the church nor for you. Discontinue at any time with at least 4 days notice.