

# PEW NEWS

## August 2020

### ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

#### **God's Gift of Fellowship**

"After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!'" Revelation 7:9-10

I have been blessed to serve a sister congregation in our Southeastern District for several months as they have worked through the reconciliation process. My time with them has highlighted the importance of FELLOWSHIP and I wanted to share some of what I learned with you.

I met so many WONDERFUL people! This church has been really blessed. I lost count of the number of people that told me they had been in the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod for 50, 60 and even 70 years. But I also met lots and lots of people who told me that they had only recently become a Lutheran. That only recently had they joined the church. Isn't it great to have both people new to the faith and people who have been around for a long time?

I met people who had lived in various parts of the country and been pastored by people I still know and respect. I met one person who had been served by one of my old pastors who had been such a blessing to me. I met teachers, business leaders, principals, dentists, CEO's, therapists, nurses and musicians. In fact, this church has so many musicians that they had to ask some of them to take a break!

I met a group of men who play golf together and then putter around the church fixing things. I met women who run a thrift shop and donate the proceeds to charity. So many different people. So many different gifts. They reminded me so much of the picture in the Revelation to St. John of all the different people gathered around God's throne in heaven. THAT'S the FELLOWSHIP that God wants for each of us. All of these different people are enjoying fellowship with God as they gather around His throne. All of these different people are enjoying fellowship with one another as they gather together. That kind of fellowship is a gift from God. It's not possible on our own.

There are a million different things that can divide us. Republican versus Democrat. Black versus white. Face mask or no face mask. American versus Chinese. Old versus young. The haves versus the have nots. Management versus labor. Virginia versus Virginia Tech. Contemporary music versus traditional music. CBS versus Fox. Early service versus late service. Men versus women. We could keep going on! It is so easy to find a reason to be uncomfortable around someone else. They're so different.

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That's exactly what happened with this great church that I served. They became fixated on the differences between themselves and they allowed these differences to divide them from each other and from God and they lost the very gift that God had given them. Fellowship. This church lost hundreds of people from Sunday morning worship.

When you look at the list of things that can divide us you come to understand that it's a miracle that we can get along at all. It really is. It's God's miracle. Fellowship is His gift. God created Adam to be in fellowship with Him. Then God created Eve to share in fellowship with Adam and God. When that fellowship was destroyed by Adam and Eve's rebellion God restored that fellowship by sending His son to die for that sin and then rise to new life. That miraculous resurrection empowers our own resurrection in the waters of Holy Baptism so that fellowship is restored with God. That miraculous resurrection that we celebrate every day empowers us to forgive our friends and neighbors so that our relationships can experience a resurrection. So that we can enjoy fellowship with God and each other. Our fellowship is absolutely a gift.

That's John's point in 1 John 1:6-7 John writes, "If we say we have fellowship with [God] while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin." It is the miraculous death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that restores our fellowship through mutual confession and forgiveness.

It was my privilege to serve this church in that capacity. I simply pointed them over and over to that miraculous death and resurrection and as they focused on what Jesus did for them his sacrifice began to overcome the things that had previously divided them. I was privileged to see people who had refused to talk or be in the same room for months forgive each other and rejoice to be in fellowship once again. They recognized that what God has given them is greater than all of the things that divide them.

Their work isn't done. There are still many people who are not enjoying that fellowship and Satan will keep showing them more things that can divide them. But today there is a group in their midst who understands how to overcome everything that divides them and I am confident that they'll keep pointing each other to the blood of Jesus Christ under which they have been united.

Our work isn't done either. There are many challenges today that can so easily divide our family. Maybe it's the miles that now separate us from members like Blake and Melissa Phillips who are moving to Boston. Or the miles that separate us from Ray and Myra Bauch who moved to Tennessee. Maybe it's social distancing which has meant that we're not able to hug friends we've known for years. Maybe it's the pandemic which has made it harder to care for our neighbors in the communities that surround us.

But it doesn't have to. Listen to the apostle Paul in Romans 8:37-39. "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." What unites us is greater than ANYTHING that could possibly divide us!

So as we move forward we recommit ourselves to *experiencing and sharing the love of Jesus Christ* because in it we enjoy the gift of fellowship!

In His Service,  
Pastor Matt Sorenson

## **Opportunities to Use Your Gifts in the Kingdom of God**

We are currently in need of volunteers to coordinate three ways in which we serve the Lord with our gifts. These coordinators would work with the Pastor, the Council, and members of our congregation to implement ideas for experiencing and sharing the love of Jesus Christ.

*Stewardship Coordinator* - Implements plans to help members use their time, financial resources and intellectual gifts to the glory of God. They would be responsible for coordinating the current program of newsletter articles and readers in the service as well as working with the Council on ideas to pay off our mortgage.

*Evangelism Coordinator* - Implements plans to help members share the love of Jesus Christ with their neighbor. There are many new resources available to us. This person would explore those resources to understand which would best equip our people to serve their neighbor.

*InterVarsity Coordinator* - Serves on the InterVarsity Council and coordinates the needs of the InterVarsity chapter at Longwood University with the church Council and members of our congregation. This is an opportunity for outreach at Longwood and to serve young people in our community.

## **Applying Bible Principles**

God's Word has more to say about money and material possessions than about heaven and hell combined. Obviously, how we as His children handle what God has entrusted to us is a very important subject to Him.

Money is also the only subject about which God says, in essence, "Prove Me. Trust Me. Try Me." He does not issue that challenge concerning any other aspect of our Christian walk of faith. Not about prayer; not about sharing our faith with others; not even about salvation. Just money.

God said to Malachi, the prophet, "Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test . . . if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."

Some promises in the Bible are unconditional in nature. They are going to be fulfilled, regardless of what we might or might not do. Others could be described as "if . . . then" promises. *If* we will do our part, *then* God will do His part. This passage from Malachi 3:10 is one of the latter. If we will bring our tithes to God's storehouse, then He will open for us the windows of heaven and pour out for us such a blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

The question is whether we really believe God when He makes a promise like this. If we do, we will take Him at His Word. We will accept His challenge and "test" Him by giving to Him as He directs. And *if* we do that by faith, *then* we can be confident that God will meet that "test" by providing all that we need — and more.

## Treasurer's Report

<b>Jun-20</b>			<b>2nd Quarter 2020</b>	
<b>Total Collections &amp; Savings Used</b>	<b>\$13,331.96</b>		<b>Total Collections &amp; Savings Used</b>	<b>\$55,711.05</b>
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$17,732.52</b>		<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$52,772.51</b>
<b>Difference</b>	<b>-\$4,400.56</b>		<b>Difference</b>	<b>\$2,938.54</b>
<b>Jun-20</b>			2nd Quarter	
<b>Total Savings Used</b>	<b>None</b>		<b>Total Savings Used</b>	<b>\$7000.00</b>
<b>MOM Mission Match</b>			<b>MOM Mission Match</b>	
<b>Add Mortgage Paid</b>	<b>\$695.00</b>		<b>Add Mortgage Paid</b>	<b>\$4,175.00</b>

# SOCIAL MINISTRY

## SHOE BOX PACKING August 22 – September 12

1. We are planning to fill **100 shoe boxes** this year, but the Packing Party will be Different
2. **Individuals / Families may pick up 1-5 empty shoeboxes at the church starting August 22**
3. Begin packing them and **return** them to the church Fellowship Hall **by September 12**
4. The boxes will be PRE-LABELED for each AGE GROUP: 10 Boxes each for Boys & Girls ages 2-5; 15 Boxes each ages 6-9 and 25 Boxes each for Boys & Girls ages 10-14
5. **25 “Kits for Kids” for Boys & Girls ages 10-14** will be available through a Thrivent Action Team Grant, 25 of each: Sewing & Clothes Line Kits, Tools & Fishing Kits. **These “Kits” are for YOU to add to your shoebox if you plan to fill a box for ages 10-14.**

**THINGS TO INCLUDE IN EACH BOX:** (Soap & Wash Cloth, Tooth Brush, Bag, Pencil Case & Pencils, Comb, Plastic Cup, Spiral Notebook, Crayons, A Wow Item (something special), Item of Clothing (1-2), other accessories or school items, small toys or useful items, and a personal note )

**DO NOT INCLUDE: NO liquids, lotions, medications, toothpaste, candy, gum, used or glass items, knives, toy guns or war toys.**

The following items will be available at the church for EACH BOX: **A Homemade Bag; wash cloth & soap; Pencil Case & Pencils, sharpener & erasers; Comb & Plastic Cup.**

**You will need to BUY / Recommended Items To Include:**

1. **NECESSITIES:** Tooth brush (NO toothpaste), Spiral notebook or Coloring book, and Crayons
2. **A WOW ITEM:** Doll (consider including doll clothes), Car or Truck, Soccer Ball deflated (include a manual air pump so that the ball can be re-inflated), Baseball and Glove, Stuffed animal, Small musical instrument (such as a harmonica or woodwind recorder), etc.
3. **CLOTHING ITEM (1 OR 2 ITEMS):** T- Shirts, Shorts, Pillowcase dress (loose-fitting sundress), Underwear, Socks, Flip-flops, Hat/scarf/mittens

#### **4. OTHER POSSIBLE ITEMS:**

**Accessories:** Hair bows, Sunglasses, Friendship bracelets, Wrist watch;

**School Supplies:** Colored pencils, Pens, Markers, Chalk, Blank index cards, Solar-powered calculator, Scissors, Ruler, Protractor, Watercolor set, paint brushes, canvas or paper, playing cards, playdough (Consider adding plastic cookie cutters), Puzzles, Stickers;

**Toys:** Jump rope, small ball, small toy cars, yo-yo, Kaleidoscope, small Etch A Sketch, frisbee, hacky sack, slinky;

**Useful / Work Items:** work gloves, rope or twine, gardening tools (no seeds), Binoculars, Compass, Brightly colored rope or twine, Magnets

**5. NOTE:** Note Cards will be available at church for you to include. You may enclose a note to the child and a photo of yourself, your family, or church group. Samaritan's Purse encourages personal notes and addresses as occasionally, a pen-pal relationship develops. However, Samaritan's Purse cautions about correspondence from a stranger, especially one soliciting support. Samaritan's Purse does not encourage shoebox recipients or ministry partner churches around the world to solicit support from donors.

6. Consider adding a personal note telling the child about your relationship with Jesus Christ. During this time more than ever we need to bring hope and joy into the lives of children all over the world. Please pray for the children who you are packing the shoebox for, many of whom may have never heard the Name of Jesus. Remember, the shoebox you will pack with gifts and necessary items is a tangible expression of God's love and a way to share the love of Jesus Christ with others.

7. After receiving their shoebox and once the shouts of joy have calmed down, the children will go through the Greatest Journey Bible Study with local church workers and Samaritan's Purse Staff. You may be a big part of transforming families and communities as new churches are planted. Thank you for all your support in making this year's Shoebox Packing a Success !!

**Operation Christmas Child Community Kick Off will be Sept 12 at Heritage Baptist Church with a Virtual Speaker sharing their Shoebox Experience – More Details to come... Marion Kyner**

Here is a sample of some of the 200 masks our ladies made in answer to the Lutheran World Relief Challenge of receiving 75,000 for sending in their Fall Care Packages. Thanks to those who helped.

