

## PEW NEWS

### St John's Lutheran Church September 2021

#### Embracing Godly Habits

The end of August and beginning of September signal a change in routine for many people. Summer vacations are quickly coming to an end and we're returning to the routines that define the rest of the year. Children are returning to classrooms college students will be filling the dorms and classrooms and employees return to work refreshed from a rest and change of scenery.

That makes this a great time to consider your spiritual routines as well. Listen to the apostle Paul address this opportunity in Romans 6:17-18. "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness."

Someone is a slave to sin when their thoughts and actions are dictated by their sinful desires. Satan is the puppet master pulling the strings and we are dancing on the end of the strings. Sinful desires that we hold on to lead to sinful actions. Most of us can recall an incident or a period of time we regret because we did something we never thought we would do. We were a slave to sin dancing to every desire of the evil puppet master.

Paul rejoices that God has set His children free from their slavery to sin. In Romans 6:6 he proclaims, "We know that our old self was crucified with [Jesus] in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin." Celebrate this spectacular news! Jesus took all of your sins to the cross where he died for them. They have been paid for, forgiven, erased and brought to nothing. Paul points to the glorious opportunity that we have - that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Through the forgiveness of sins the puppet master's strings have been cut! Our relationship with him has ended and we have been brought into a fabulous new relationship with Christ! As we trust in Jesus for forgiveness we learn to trust in him to guide every aspect of our lives. Jesus does that as we read and study our Bibles, as we worship and as we celebrate his presence and his work in our lives through Holy Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

In this new relationship these become our habits and so Jesus guides every aspect of our lives. We become a slave of righteousness because our thoughts and actions are now dictated by Jesus. That doesn't mean that we're perfect. Slaves serve a master but they still struggle with their own thoughts and desires. As slaves of righteousness we make a habit of giving Jesus our sins and struggles so that we

can celebrate his forgiveness, be strengthened by his presence and live before him in righteousness and purity forever.

## **New Bible Study Beginning in September**

Our Fall Bible study series will begin on September 19th (Sunday) at 9:15 am and September 14th (Tuesday) at 7 pm. Both of them will be available in person or on- line.

Once again we will be using the LifeLight series which gives us a Bible reading to do and then questions to answer based on the assigned reading. The series includes readings and question for five days and then gives you two days to rest. In addition to the reading assignments and question each booklet comes packed with information about the topic. The booklets will be available in the back of the church and the cost is \$10. You can put your money in the box on the back table, drop it off in the office or include it in the offering plate. Please note that it is for the Bible study booklet.

The topic this Fall will be 1 & 2 Kings. The Lutheran Study Bible makes this observation.

"High places" are mentioned more than 100 times in the Old Testament, most often in 1 and 2 Kings. These sacred sites, which often stood on hilltops but could be on platforms in towns, were long-standing places of sacrifice. Israel's people and earliest rulers properly worshiped at such places before Solomon built the temple. However, after Solomon built the temple, worship at these high places increasing became a mixture of devotion to both Yahweh and false gods. People neglected the Lord's Word and the temple in Jerusalem, committing themselves to false worship at their local high places. Wicked kings and false prophets tolerated or supported such false worship, yet some faithful kings and prophets called people back to true worship at the one temple.

We struggle with high places as well. Our lives are full of a mixture of devotion to both Yahweh and false gods. That's why we rejoice in God's Word which confronts our idolatry and calls us back to the worship of the one true God. That's why we rejoice in Jesus who dies for our idolatry so that we're always welcome in God's house.

## **Bring a Friend Sunday - September 12th**

While we encourage you to bring a friend to church every week we have a special opportunity for you on September 12th. We've set aside this Sunday as "Bring a Friend" Sunday. We're doing several things to encourage you to bring a friend

1. There is no Bible study that day so that you can pick your friend up and bring them to church with you without missing Bible study!
2. There will be welcome bags for every guest that you bring.
3. We will have a potluck supper after the late service to enjoy extra fellowship.

Now I want to challenge each of you to bring a friend with you that doesn't normally worship with us. Invite one of your neighbors. Invite a friend from work. Invite a friend from the gym. It's your choice but begin praying right now about who the Lord would like you to invite and that He would make their heart receptive to your invitation.

## **Responding to COVID-19 as Christian**

When Jesus is asked what is the most important commandment he said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:37-39) Since the beginning of this worldwide pandemic we, as children of God, have sought to do just that. Loving the Lord our God looked like honoring the authorities in our lives even when we vigorously disagreed with them. Loving our neighbors as ourselves looked like avoiding large gatherings, social distancing and wearing masks because the experts told us that we could unwittingly infect our neighbors.

We rejoiced when the infection rate came down, mandates were lifted and we were allowed to return to many of our former practices. However, recently the infection rate has begun to climb and it is apparent that COVID-19 is making a return to our area. The COVID-19 unit at the hospital has been reopened and as I write the hospitals in the area are no longer taking patients. Seven area hospitals are full.

There are many divergent and sincerely held beliefs in our midst about the effectiveness of vaccines, masks and other mandates. It is clear that we do not all agree on the best course of action to take to resolve this pandemic. During this pandemic many have become concerned about the government or others trying to infringe upon their rights including their right to wear a mask or not and their right to determine what goes in their body or doesn't go in their body.

I would focus your attention on how Jesus and the apostle Paul respond to this issue. We recently talked about it in church. In Ephesians 5:21 the apostle Paul tells us to submit "to one another out of reverence for Christ." Paul points to what Jesus did for you. Jesus gave up the most important right any of us have. Jesus gave up his right to live. Why? So that you, who were sentenced to die, could live. Jesus gave up his right because he loves you! Paul says that because we cherish what Christ did for us we should submit

to our neighbors. We should put their needs ahead of our needs. Putting their needs ahead of our needs often involves giving up rights that we cherish.

Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians 10:23-24. "'All things are lawful,' but not all things are helpful. 'All things are lawful,' but not all things build up. Let no one seek his own good, but the good of his neighbor." There are two facets of this text that are particularly helpful for our situation. First, Paul absolutely disagrees with his neighbors. Paul knows that meat offered to idols is harmless. Second, Paul has been set free from the liturgical law to eat anything he wants. He has a right to eat meat. That's why he says all things are lawful. But Paul recognizes that because his neighbors believe something else his behavior will not bring them closer to God. It will not build them up in their faith. So for the good of his neighbor Paul lays down his right.

Wearing a mask when you're around a group of other people may be one of the easiest ways you can demonstrate love for your neighbor - particularly when they know you cherish your rights and you disagree about the effectiveness of wearing a mask. It's putting their need to see the Gospel in action ahead of your needs and rights. May God give us grace to let our light shine every day!

**Circuit Forum and Convention Delegate Needed** - May 9 - 13, 2022 the Southeastern District will hold its convention. This is a fantastic opportunity for worship and fellowship with the body of Christ. During this convention representatives from district churches which span from Pennsylvania to South Carolina will meet in Richmond for worship, fellowship, elections and to work together in proclaiming the Gospel. While business can be tedious I find the joy of the worship and fellowship far outweighs the tedium of the business. During this convention the travel will be kept to a minimum because of issues related to the pandemic. We will still need to gather in Richmond for a day. But the work begins this year as we need a representative at the Circuit Forum in October 2021 to elect the next circuit visitor. The circuit visitor is the pastor from our region who works with the District President to serve the congregations of our local area. The current Circuit Visitor is Rev. Bill Carr who has indicated that he does not want to continue in that role. Before Rev. Carr that position was filled by Rev. Robert Sorenson. This is a GREAT opportunity and important work. Please consider serving the Lord in this capacity. If you're interested please speak to Michele Sousa or Pastor.

Nomination of Qualified Persons for District Offices, Board of Directors - We have the privilege of nominating people to serve in District offices. All nominations must be submitted prior to December 15,

2021. Positions to be filled include President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, Board Member - Lay, and Board Member - Commissioned. If you have questions or want more information go to [www.se.lcms.org](http://www.se.lcms.org). The nominating forms can be downloaded from there as well.

## **Lutheran Women in Mission (LWML)**

Not only do I look forward to cooler days in September, but I'm also happy to announce that it is time to get back to our regular monthly LWML meetings. **September 14th at 9:30 AM** will be our first meeting of the Fall Season. We will be meeting in the Fellowship Hall

"Yes, Jesus loves me." "When I Am Weak, He Is Strong." Our Bible study for this month is from Lutheran Woman's Quarterly, Summer 2021, pages 22-23. You can find the Quarterly in the kitchen by the mailboxes. Pick one up for yourself and get another one to share. (Let me know if you are unable to go to church to get your copy, and I will see that you get one.)

Every woman in our church is invited to join us for a time of Bible study and fellowship. We will also be discussing some important items coming up about which we need to make decisions. Please join us.

Mabelle Bloker

## **Exercise Class**

Exercise class suitable for all ages and genders begins on Tuesday, September 7, 2021 @ 2:30. The class is 45 minutes long, can also be considered to be gentle exercise, and is taught by a certified instructor. The cost is minimal as the teacher only charges a one-time fee of \$20. Each participant can contribute towards the \$20. See you there.

## **July 2021 Treasurer's Report**

<b>Total Collection (less savings)</b>	\$22,270.57
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$18,070.02
	July - 21
<b>Total Saving Used</b>	\$4,461.81
<b>Additional Mortgage Paid</b>	\$1,220.00
<b>Stained Glass Windows</b>	\$5,800.00



## **SAMARITAN'S PURSE OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD**

**SHOEBOXES - Ages 10-14**

**25 of each for Boys and Girls**

### **Christmas Tree Ornaments**

#### **WHAT'S NEEDED by September 5th.**

**Small Toys for boys and girls age 10-14:** JAX, games, books, Jewelry, jump ropes Musical instrument, Yo-Yo, party noise makers, solar calculators, flashlights, puzzles, and friendship bracelets.

**Clothing for boys and girls age 10-14 :** T shirts / Sox (boys) and underwear and T-shirts,

15 Flip Flops (Girls )

### **WE HAVE ENOUGH MATCHBOX CARS AND BALLS**

#### **PROJECT LEADER WORKSHOP AND PIZZA/PACKING PARTY(11:30AM)**

**Saturday, Sept. 11, from 10-12 at St. John's.**

Other church groups will be attending to learn more about Operation Christmas Child and to glean some ideas from those of us who have packed shoeboxes before. We hope you can attend and share your experience with the community. We will have all of our Shoebox supplies set up for the Packing Party which will start at 11:30.

**KITS FOR KIDS PACKING - DATE TO BE DETERMINED but will be the week prior to the packing party. We will be packing Sewing Kits and Tool Kits. We need Fabric for sewing kits (25 pieces)**

**STEWARDSHIP CORNER** I want to share with you that we have decided to postpone the Realizing God's Vision Banquet until the early part of next year. Our excitement for rejoicing in all that God is doing in our community through His children here at St. John's is still with us and we look forward to being together in celebration of God's work. Due to the rising number of cases of the delta variant of Covid, we feel that it is better to wait for a time when we all can come together to celebrate and bring praise to God rather than putting anyone in an uncomfortable situation to have to choose whether to

attend. Our vision is to be a refuge (a place of safety) for our members and the community. None of us know what the situation in the community and world will look like in six weeks and so we will wait until things calm down. We have not lost anything, and we will pick up our plans at a later date, possibly February or even into May. In the meantime, we are planning a Commitment Sunday in October with continued discussion about our ministries and realizing God's vision. A family life center is not about a building, it is our ministry, it is about being disciples of Christ and walking beside people, broken people like ourselves, as we both grow closer to God sharing and experiencing the love of Jesus Christ.

## **Applying Bible Principles**

As we have observed previously, we do not give to get. Doing so would indicate that our motive for giving was not proper. But as we have also seen previously, when we give for God's glory and out of obedience to Him, we receive back from Him in like manner.

Listen to the words of the Lord Jesus in Luke 6:38 — “. . . give, and it will be given to you. Good measure pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.”

Notice that our Lord did not couch His pronouncement with a series of “if” clauses. He did not say, “If you give on a certain day of the week.” Nor did He say, “If you give to a certain cause.” He didn't even back up His claim with, “If you give a certain amount.” He simply said, “Give, and it will be given to you.”

And then Jesus went on to say, “For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.” In other words, if you use a teaspoon in giving to God, God will use a teaspoon in giving back to you. If you use a coal scoop in your giving, God will do the same. If you use an 18-wheeler tandem dump truck in your giving, so will God.

The problem is that some of us use a teaspoon in our giving, but we want God to use a dump truck in giving back to us. But God's system of finance just doesn't work that way. He always gives a full measure, one that has been shaken and allowed to settle so that it is completely full, but He gives to us with the same measure that we give.

With a promise like that from the Creator of the universe, why don't we give more freely? The real issue is whether or not we really believe God, whether we are willing to accept His Word as true, regardless of what our natural instincts and tendencies may tell us. God says, “Give, and it will be given to you.” That's why when we give to God, we are the primary beneficiaries.