

PEW NEWS
ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH
OCTOBER 2021

Thriving in the Midst of Tribulation

The toll of human suffering right now is overwhelming. Wildfires continue to burn taking with them whole communities. Hurricane Ida just swept through taking lives and burying communities. The people of Haiti are trying to recover from decades of political corruption and a massive earthquake that leveled communities. Over 100,000 people have been evacuated from Afghanistan while countless others still try to get out. COVID-19 continues to spread throughout our local communities and has our hospital workers stretched to the breaking point and I haven't mentioned your personal trials and tribulations. We all struggle.

Jesus talks about the impact of tribulation and persecution in the parable of the sower. In Matthew 13:20-21 he says, "As for what was sown on rocky ground, this is the one who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy, yet he has no root in himself, but endures for a while, and when tribulation or persecution arises on account of the word, immediately he falls away." Jesus says that we lose our faith and the accompanying fruit of the spirit (love, joy, hope, peace, etc.) because we don't have roots that are deep enough to get us through tribulation and persecution. Our roots are not deep enough because our soil is rocky. In other words, we have lots of things preventing God's word from taking root in our lives. Things that we prioritize over the word of God. Things like exercise, work, education, sports, hobbies, and friends often get put before spending time in God's word and so our soil gets rocky and our roots shallow. Jesus explains what happens next in Matthew 13:6. "But when the sun rose they were scorched. And since they had no root, they withered away."

But God, the master gardener, has the answer. God continues to generously sow His seed, His powerful word, everywhere - even on your rocky ground. God's word shows us that we have sinned by trusting in things rather than the word of God. But then God's word assures us that "if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) The master Gardener uses the precious blood of Christ to cleanse our soil of it's rocks so that our roots can grow deep and strong. So that in the midst of the heat our roots feed on invitations in God's word like Matthew 11:28. "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Then the joy we had in hearing the word endures.

If you're feeling a little parched in the midst of the tribulation then let God sow some of His powerful seed in your rocky soil. Read your Bible, join a Bible study or go to church and watch as He makes it to produce abundant grain!

Mission of the Month - Feeding Farmville

This month all of your contributions to the Mission of the Month will go to support Feeding Farmville. Feeding Farmville's vision is to help our neighbors grow closer to God through His unconditional love. They accomplish that by bringing a coalition of volunteers together from across our community to deliver over 800 meals to our neighbors on Thanksgiving morning. While the volunteers are delivering the meals they take time to share fellowship and prayers with their neighbors. Every year this project brings tears of joy to both the volunteers and those receiving the meals.

Although this project has been led by a group from St. John's Lutheran Church it only works because it enjoys broad support from many of the churches and businesses in the community. The churches and businesses supply everything from monetary donations to volunteers to pumpkin pies that they have prepared. This year the project is even more important because even more of our neighbors are struggling both with finances and

loneliness. Therefore, your support is even more important. We will need volunteers to cook, package and deliver meals. We need financial donations to purchase food and supplies. We need your prayers!

Any donation received in a Mission of the Month envelope during October will be given to Feeding Farmville and will be used to provide those meals that bless so many people!

The Realizing God's Vision Campaign

Jesus' command to his followers then and now is captured in Matthew 28:19-20 where he says, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to

observe all that I have commanded you." In Acts 1:8 Jesus shares the same command in the form of a vision for the church. He says, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." The church is sent to the corners of the earth to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching.

Since that vision was given churches have found different ways to fulfill God's command to make disciples. Some make disciples by teaching children in Sunday school. Some make disciples by caring for the poor. Some make disciples by sending missionaries out. Some make disciples in the nursery, day school or elementary school. Some make disciples by leading prison ministries or college ministries. Most make disciples by welcoming people into their worship service.

How a given church makes disciples should be a function of the gifts that God has given to those believers and the needs of the community around them. Several years ago we prayed about what God wanted this to look like

for our community of believers. We sought to understand God's vision for us and after lots of prayer and reflection we adopted the following vision.

Our family will be a refuge for those struggling with the impact of sin on our world including hatred, depression, division, lack of money, illness, and weariness. By daily covering the broken hearted with the blood of Jesus Christ, we will be God's instruments to overcome that which divides generations, marriages, churches, races and communities so that we can be one. Not only will we accomplish this through the day to day work of the church but we will establish a distinct family life center, led by a called worker, to share God's love with the community through Bible oriented education and vocation programs. We will multiply our ability to share the love of Jesus Christ by breathing new life into old ministries and planting new ministries. As the Spirit accomplishes this work in our midst we will be a community of believers growing closer to God and full of hope as we await our promised inheritance. This is God's vision for St. John's Lutheran Church and we are passionate about living it.

It is absolutely spectacular to understand where God is leading us! Since then we have been working on realizing God's vision. We agreed that we had to accomplish three objectives to realize this vision: we must grow as disciples of Christ; we must grow as stewards of God's gifts and we must be a refuge for our neighbors.

We have seen success in some areas and setbacks in others. We continue to be a refuge by hosting Feeding Farmville. We have found exciting new ways to be a refuge by leading a seminar on Peacemaking and by hosting a Alzheimer's support groups. We have filled the evangelism chairperson and the stewardship chairperson positions which has been open for a long time. We hosted a friends and family Sunday and we have doubled the number of visitors in our worship services. Praise the Lord!

But there is more that needs to be accomplished for us to realize God's vision. We need new ways to make disciples because the days of the undisciplined walking into the church are limited. We are currently exploring how to disciple people in one on one relationships in a way that can be replicated over and over! This will help us raise up disciples with deeper roots both inside and outside the church and in the family life center.

But we still have two issues - people to serve and financial resources. The great news is that God has provided both! God has provided the people we need to serve in the various positions we need to fill. We're just waiting for you to be convinced that you can do it with God's help! Second, we have the financial resources for the family life center but today they are:

My Commitment to the Lord

- I (we) will make the following commitment to God for the upcoming year:

Sharing Time

- To being in worship regularly.
- To DAILY reading of God's word and prayer.
- To participating in a Bible Study.

Sharing Abilities

- To serve the Lord in the community by using His gifts at:

-
- To serve the Lord at church by getting involved with :
-
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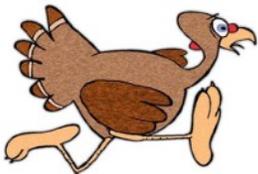
Sharing Income

- To tithe (10%) of the income God has given me (us).
- To grow to be a tither. I (we) will increase my (our) giving to ____ % of my (our) income this year.
- To giving \$_____ per week for the coming year.

Realizing God's Vision

- To make this ministry possible sooner with a one time gift of \$_____

There are copies for you in the Narthex.



YES, VIRGINIA, THERE WILL BE FEEDING FARMVILLE 2021.

The turkeys have come and the work has begun. We will still meet requirements concerning COVID- 19 again this year as required. Several of our chief workers from the past are dealing with health issues so we are looking for some new faces to step forth to lend a hand with organizing & planning for the event. One area is in seeking the volunteers to bake the pies and turkeys (we have a list from last year for reference). Another area is assistance with mapping routes, coordinating recipients and drivers. There are other tasks that can be completed while at home or helping at church for a few hours. One area we would love for someone to handle is establishing a prayer team willing to cover this event in prayer.

If you are interested in serving your community in any of these areas or have questions about serving in some other way, please contact Shirley Sorenson at 434.391.3333 or sls.nanbear@gmail.com or come to an organizational meeting on Wed., Oct. 6 at 7pm at church.

Treasurer's Report for August 2021

Collections less savings & stained glass donations	\$17456.71
Savings used	\$1953.99
Stained Glass Window Donations	\$850.00
Total Expenses	\$17967.17
Lutheran World Relief Donation in August	\$687.75
Total Mortgage Paid for 2021 thus far	\$32570.91
Amount remaining to reach goal for Stained Glass Windows	\$1263.00

LUTHERAN WOMEN IN MISSION NEWS

WELCOME BACK, ALL LADIES! We had our first LWML meeting on September 14th since breaking for the summer. It was so good to see everyone, share a Bible study, and discuss what we plan for the future. On October 12th we will be resuming our usual schedule for our meetings as the second Tuesday of each month at 9:30 in the Fellowship Hall. We discussed

at our September meeting going back to each us just bringing our own sandwich. The hostess will provide a dessert.

In September we discussed how to use the generous monetary gift we had received. There were many excellent suggestions. One of them was for new stoles for Pastor, but we found that funds had already been donated specifically for that purpose. Therefore, we focused on the other ideas which included:

Haiti earthquake relief

Refugee relief

Hurricane relief for Louisiana

Church mortgage

Invest in LCEF

California fire relief

Keep some in our account for the charities we support at Christmas.

A number of those listed can be fulfilled by donating to the LCMS Disaster Response and LCMS World Relief and Human Care team.

Please pray about what God would have us do with this \$5,000 , and we will vote on it October 12th at our next meeting. Thank you all for your participation in this Gospel spread. I look forward to seeing you all at our next meeting.

Serving the Lord with Gladness,
Mabelle Bloker

The Ladies' Lunch Has a New Name~

The Ladies' Lunch Bunch met at Merk's Place in September, and we plan to meet again on October 14th at 11:00 to visit with each and order our food at 11:30, so you can come any time. [Note: the schedule for our Lunch date will be the Thursday after the LWML meeting.] Also note that the "Ladies' Lunch Bunch" is open to everyone, not just ladies. We had two very nice gentlemen join us in September. We are changing the name to "The Lunch Bunch."