



# St. Johns Epistle

St. Johns Lutheran  
Church  
Berrysburg, PA

July/August 2020

Dear Friends in Jesus,

As we all continue to take cautious steps down the road toward (we hope and pray) one day returning to something at least very much like the “normal” we knew before March, I am delighted to use this space to share information about our planned return to in-person worship here on The Hill. All of the details, as worked out by Congregational Council and me at our June 14 meeting, follow directly after this letter, and I would encourage you to give them a read. The first thing that you will note is that this doesn’t in any way represent a return to “normal” – just as moving into the “Green Phase” in the rest of society doesn’t equal “normal”. For starters, there are a whole lot of details such as we’ve never had to think about before. They can appear like overkill and even heavy-handed, but that is not at all my/our intention. Instead, as it says early in the plan, all of these details come ***“out of an abundance of concern and protection and love for each other – as Jesus would have us do – in these times of so much uncertainty and so much that is still unknown about the COVID-19 virus.”***

All of the details matter, so again I would ask you to please give them a read on the pages which follow, but I want to especially highlight some of them:

**1** Our 11:00am in-person outdoor worship doesn’t affect our Zoom Christian Education times at 8:45am or our Zoom worship at 9:30am in any way. It is no better than Zoom worship in any way – simply a different kind of worship opportunity for those who would be comfortable with it.

**2** For at least the first week(s), attendance will be strictly limited to 24 persons plus me/the worship leader. As we gain experience, Council and I will be looking to safely increase that number as soon as possible, but the attendance limit now and going forward will be “iron-clad”. *Because I absolutely don’t want to ever have to turn anyone away from worship, please contact me ahead of time if at all possible to let me know of your plans to attend on a given Sunday.* If you are truly comfortable just taking the chance – or if it is a last-minute realization that you can get here by 11:00am after all and you’re okay just seeing if there is still “room” – please come on over and check, ***but, again, the attendance limit, for all of our sakes, is “iron clad” – no exceptions – so please don’t put me or you in the sad situation of my having to enforce the limit, for that is what I will do.***

**3** A mask covering both nose and mouth at all times is required for every worshipper over the age of two. This also is “iron clad”, with no exceptions for any reason, including medical conditions. As our society re-opens, research has shown that the riskiest thing that any of us can do is gather in a group for an extended time – e.g. worship – but research has also shown that having everyone wear a mask can reduce any risk of virus transmission by as much as 75%. Let me say it again – ***the mask requirement, covering both nose and mouth, for all of our sakes, is “iron clad” – no exceptions for any reason – so please don’t put me or you in the sad situation of my having to enforce the rule, for that is what I will do.***

4 Please be sure to bring along your own comfortable chair – with which we will all arrange ourselves to observe “safe” (six-foot) distancing from other folks not in our “party”.

5 Please be sure to dress for the weather – think chilly and breezy here on The Hill even if it’s not at home – we won’t be able to lower the pavilion sides or go inside.

6 And last, but most certainly not least, please do not attend in-person now or any time in the future if you aren’t feeling well in any way or ***if you have been exposed any time in the prior 14 days to a person who subsequently develops COVID-19-like symptoms or who tests positive for COVID-19.***

Please read on to get all of the details, and please don’t hesitate to contact me or any member of Congregational Council with thoughts, suggestions, constructive criticisms or anything else that’s on your mind and heart! Please believe me when I say that I’m cringing right now as I look back at the firm tone of what I have written above. As you’ve come to know me, I’m hoping you’ve found that I dislike confrontation and conflict more than most people, but that, when they are necessary in the name of faithfulness and love of neighbor – including all of you, my fellow worshippers – I won’t shy away from it. Please especially believe me when I say how much I am looking forward to sharing this worship opportunity – as well as the Zooming that I have come to enjoy so much – with you, my congregational family!

***PASTOR TOM***

***Initial Plan for Return to In-Person Worship at St. John Evangelical Lutheran***

+Assuming no COVID-19 surge or backtracking from the CDC/PA Department of Health as to “re-opening” guidance, this plan will take effect on Sunday, June 28, and be in effect, initially, for the “summer” period, through Sunday, September 13, 2020.

+This plan will not in any way alter our pre-existing Sunday 8:45am time of Zoom Christian Education and 9:30am time of Zoom worship.

+To those Zoom experiences, we will add a Sunday 11:00am in-person worship opportunity, outdoors only, in the pavilion. The rest of this document refers to this 11:00am in-person outdoor worship opportunity.

***Everything which follows comes out of an abundance of concern and protection and love for each other – as Jesus would have us do – in these times of so much uncertainty and so much that is still unknown about the COVID-19 virus!***

+To make sure that everyone attending can maintain a mandatory 6-foot safe spacing in the pavilion space, attendance will initially be limited to **24 persons**, plus Pastor Tom/the worship leader. This number will be regularly reviewed by Pastor Tom in consultation with Congregational Council as we live with this worship experience, with an eye to increasing the limit as can be safely done.

+To make sure that no one coming for in-person worship would ever need to be turned away due to safe distancing concerns, ***everyone planning on attending on a given Sunday is strongly encouraged to please contact Pastor Tom/the worship leader ahead of time to “sign up”.*** Persons who come for worship but who haven’t signed up will also be welcome to attend ***as long as we have not already reached our limit of 24 persons.*** If we are already at ***our limit of 24 persons*** those persons will be kindly asked to return to their cars. ***We want very much to make sure that this NEVER happens, hence the stress on signing up in advance!!***

+Anyone who isn't feeling well for any reason is expected to refrain from attending in-person worship. Likewise, anyone who has been exposed any time in the prior 14 days to a person who subsequently develops COVID-19-like symptoms or who tests positive for COVID-19 is expected to refrain from attending in-person worship.

+Every person attending who is age 2 or older will be required to wear a mask covering both nose and mouth the entire time they are present in the pavilion. Because any of us can be carrying and transmitting COVID-19 even though we feel just fine, and because the risk of transmission has been shown to drop by 75% if everyone present is wearing a mask, out of love for our neighbors in worship, **this is essential and no exceptions will be made for any reason.** Anyone with a medical condition that prohibits them from wearing a mask is asked to please simply join in Zoom worship and refrain from our in-person worship for the present.

+To minimize any sharing of equipment, everyone attending is required to bring their own chair and arrange it so that they are observing a mandatory safe 6-foot spacing.

+The foyer restroom will be available for those attending worship. Anyone using the restroom will be asked to wear their mask while doing so and to afterward wipe down restroom surfaces with wipes and instructions which will be provided. Also, for the safety of us all, anyone using the foyer restroom will be asked to please go no further than the foyer itself – not upstairs or through any closed doors.

+The pavilion kitchen area will be locked/unavailable for entry at all times.

+Everyone attending is asked to please remember that we take the weather as we find it and to dress accordingly. Especially, it is often much cooler and windier in the pavilion than at home. We will not be able to put down the pavilion sides or go inside and so, if conditions are or become unsafe for worship, we will cancel or cut things short.

+Pastor Tom/another appointed person will be the sole worship leader. Neither Miss Laurie nor our keyboardists will be present as leaders.

+We will avoid singing and liturgical group spoken responses (which have been shown to be very much like singing in terms of risk of spreading virus).

+To minimize any sharing of equipment, we will not use bulletins or worship books.

+In accordance with existing congregational family practice, Holy Communion will be available on the first Sunday of the month and on festival Sundays, using the bread wafer only – no wine/cup – dropped in a no-touch fashion directly into the communicant's hand by Pastor Tom. A blessing for those who do not commune will also be provided in a no-touch fashion. Each communicant will be asked to please wait until Pastor Tom has moved away before moving their mask just enough to allow them to place the wafer in their mouth. (Prior to distribution, Pastor Tom will have hand disinfecting wipes available which he will use to thoroughly sanitize his hands. These wipes will also be kept close at hand and, should Pastor Tom's hand accidentally make contact with someone else's during the serving, he will immediately pause the serving and repeat this sanitizing process before continuing.) Serving will take place with Pastor Tom going around to everyone in their safe spacing, to avoid lines or other crowding of the worshippers.

+It is planned that one or more "Hosts" will be available from at least 10:40am on to help to answer questions or otherwise guide those coming for worship while Pastor Tom makes the transition from the conclusion of 9:30am Zoom worship.

**Approved by Congregational Council 6.14.20**  
**Updated 6.14.20**



*News from Miss Laurie  
Young Christians Minister*

Hi everyone! I hope your summer has gotten off to a great start!

And speaking of summer, the Summer Schedule for worship has begun and we are having a ZOOM version of SONday Celebration every Sunday before the church service! Join us each week from 8:45 to 9:15 for our fun Sunday School experience featuring a Bible story, music, games and fun with Sunny! We are planning to remain on Zoom through the summer. I hope you'll "pop in" and join us!!

Another fun adventure for this summer is our 3-day virtual VBS experience called "Backyard BOLT towards faith in Jesus"!! With a Zoom meeting on Monday, July 20<sup>th</sup> (and each evening of VBS), Virtual VBS on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday (YOU decide whatever time works best for you) and a wrap up, Drive-In Movie night on Friday, July 24<sup>th</sup>, it will be a FULL week of VBS summer fun!! This pandemic isn't going to keep us down!! Mark your calendars and join us July 20<sup>th</sup> through July 24<sup>th</sup>!! For more information, see the following letter on Virtual VBS!!

For the Drive-In Movie Night, Nicole Radel is organizing a "Popcorn Donataion"! If you'd like to donate individually packaged bags of popcorn for the kids, Nicole has placed a plastic tub inside the front doors of the church for your donation. She'd like the bags to be there by July 17<sup>th</sup>, so that we can purchase more if necessary. Thank you, in advance, for your help!!

Finally, we hope to do something fun in August BEFORE the kids head back to school. Keep reading your emails for more information on this activity, and on VBS!

I hope you'll stay connected with me and your church family through the above activities until we are able to meet again in person in the fall!! Have an MAZING summer!!

Miss Laurie

# St. John's Youth Group

St. John's Facebook: [facebook.com/stjohnhillchurch](https://facebook.com/stjohnhillchurch)  
St. John's Children and Youth Ministry: [facebook.com/childrenandyouthministry](https://facebook.com/childrenandyouthministry)



**ELCA GATHERING HOMEPAGE:** [www.elca.org/youthgathering](http://www.elca.org/youthgathering)

The ELCA Youth Gathering team announces the theme of the 2021 Gathering, “boundless: God beyond measure,” based on Ephesians 3:19 CEV.

*“I want you to know all about Christ’s love, although it is too wonderful to be measured. Then your lives will be filled with all that God is.”*



## 2021 ELCA Youth Gathering Theme

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## *Books, Movies, Puzzles, etc. for Borrowing*

Are you in need of new reading materials and activities? While we're still trying to social distance and have limited options for gathering, there is now a table of books, movies and puzzles available for borrowing in the back of the fellowship hall. (This is in addition to the items in the library, which are always in the area near the elevator, so please check out those items, too.) There are items for all ages and interests. Just borrow, keep the items as long as you like, share with others, and return them to the blue bin for sanitizing when you are done with them. Feel free to let a note if you're looking for anything special, and the church bookworm will do her best to find some fun picks for you!

## *Books, Movies, Puzzles, etc. for Borrowing*

With the cancellation of our Annual Strawberry Festival and congregational meals of any kind for the foreseeable future, the Women of the ELCA of St. John have decided to suspend their plan to order St. John aprons until late next winter or early next spring as we (hopefully/prayerfully) begin to gear up for a new time of serving. For those folks who had already placed an order, Pat Herb will keep track of those orders and simply carry them over to next year.

## *Your tithes and offerings....*

For as long as may be needed, if you will not be attending in-person outdoor worship there are two very simple options for giving your tithes and offerings: either 1. mail your offering to the church (PO Box 270, Berrysburg, 17005-0270) or 2. drop it by the church and place it in the red plastic tub – easily and frequently disinfected – that is prominently visible in the Sunday School Room, on the table just outside Pastor Tom's office door. Pastor Tom will then see that all offerings received get securely passed along to our counters. ***As before, there is no pressure of any kind intended here, simply a reminder that, for all of us who can continue to contribute, the expenses and ministry responsibilities of congregational family life continue now as always, and those gifts are most welcome! Thank you to all the folks who have so diligently and regularly been following through!***



## *Prayer for a Pandemic*

May we who are merely inconvenienced, Remember those whose lives are at stake.

May we who have no risk factors. Remember those most vulnerable.

May we who have the luxury of working from home, Remember those who must choose between preserving their health or making their rent.

May we who have the flexibility to care for our children when their schools close, Remember those who have no options.

May we who have to cancel our trips, Remember those that have no safe place to go.

May we who are losing our margin money in the tumult of the economic market, Remember those who have no margin at all.

May we who settle in for a quarantine at home, Remember those who have no home.

As fear grips our country, let us choose love.

During this time when we cannot physically wrap our arms around each other, Let us yet find ways to be the loving embrace of God to our neighbors.

Amen.

### **MEDICAL PROFESSIONALS IN OUR PRAYERS IN THIS TIME OF COVID-19:**

- Paulette Warner (Serving in Non-Emergency Medical Transportation)
- Jenna Troutman, RN
- Jodi Thompson, CCMA
- Gwen Switzer, RTR
- Payton Stutzman, Hospital Clinical Assistant
- Kristen Spicher, RN
- Sara Shaffer, RN
- Steven Schlegel, Paramedic
- Whitni Rudisill, RN
- Joanne Rheem\*, Healthcare Administrator
- David Rheem\*, Healthcare Administrator
- Alayna Peters, Doctor of Pharmacy
- Courtney Peifer\*, Psych Technician
- Sara Paul, Family Practice Center Medical Receptionist
- Bobby Paul, BS
- Cindy Nicholson, RN\*
- Shannon Motter, RN
- Courtney Miller, B.S. R.T(R)(CT).
- Roni Mace, RN
- Heidi Lehman, RT (R)
- Alexis Lehman, EMT\* (Professional Firefighter and EMT in Metro Washington, DC Area)
- Shawnita Latsha, RT (RDMS, RVT)
- Nichole Holman, RN\*
- Dr. Tonya Henninger and Her Spouse **Dr. Sarah Bork\*** (Hospitalists in Seattle, WA)
- Robert Foreman, Paramedic
- Courtney Foreman, RN
- Glenn Fontaine, RN\*
- Ann Fontaine, PA-C\*
- Olivia Enders, CNA
- Dr. Seth Eisenberg\* (Anesthesiologist in Atlanta, GA)
- Rachel Denlinger, RN\*
- Terri Daniels, BS, RRT
- Gary Daniels, EMT (Serving in Non-Emergency Medical Transportation)
- Timothy Bruner, Doctor of Physical Therapy
- Daniel Bruner, Doctor of Chiropractic and His Spouse **Richelle Demers\***, Doctor of Chiropractic
- Dr. Jerrel Boyer\* (Neurosurgeon in Chicago, IL)
- Brett Bellis\*, Doctor of Chiropractic

\* denotes someone who is a part of our extended congregational family

## *Summer Book Discussion*

### **Summer Book Discussion Group on Zoom!**

We had a little break from book discussion, but we are now back doing some summer reading and sharing! Everyone is welcome, so if you would like to participate and haven't joined us before, you can pick up a copy of the current book on the white shelf/case in the back of the Sunday School Room. (The selection for July, **Refuge** by Terry Tempest Williams, is available there, but please let Ann know if we run out of books, and she'll order more.) We will gather by Zoom until it is safe and comfortable for small groups to meet. The schedule for the remainder of summer will be:

**Monday, July 6      7:00    Refuge by Terry Tempest Williams**

**Monday, August 3    7:00    Divine Secrets of the YaYa Sisterhood by Rebecca Wells**

Please call Ann Bruner (717.362.7895) if you need a book or have questions.

## *Congratulations*

In this "graduation season", in addition to **Cameron Thompson's** graduation from Halifax Area High School, which we noted last month, we celebrate with the following folks their recent educational achievements:

**Shawnita Latsha**, who successfully passed her vascular certification test, thereby adding additional credentials to her professional resume (and still more letters behind her name ☐);

**Alexis Lehman**, the spouse of **Jennifer Lehman**, who completed her EMT and firefighting training and is now stationed at Old Town VA #201, the fire station which also has responsibility for water rescue in the Potomac River; and

**Gwen Switzer**, who completed her imagery training at Reading Hospital, successfully passing her exams and receiving her credentials as a registered technology radiologist (and also additional letters after her name!)

We pray God's blessing on these folks and their families as they celebrate these milestones and look to new opportunities and challenges. If any congregational family graduates have been missed, or if there are corrections or additional information to be shared, please contact Pastor Tom and it will be included in a future *Epistle*.

## *Sunday School Room Updates*

At their June 14 meeting, Congregational Council approved moving ahead with the replacement of the old downstairs carpeting in the Sunday School Room area and in the conference room, at a total cost of \$9,973. With "regular" construction projects back underway for a while now, and with our building presently not being used under our current COVID-19 guidelines, it seems the perfect time to "complete" the downstairs improvements that have been underway for a couple of years now. Of the total cost, \$4,390 has already been specially contributed, with another \$2,000 pledged. Council has approved using accumulated Memorials Fund interest to cover the remaining \$3,600 cost if needed but would also welcome gifts in memory or in honor of loved ones, which would then be recorded in our Memorials Book. Please speak with Council President Roy Henry or with Pastor Tom to learn more or to make a gift!



## Virtual VBS – “Backyard BOLT Towards Faith in Jesus”

Hey everyone!

We’re so excited to announce that VBS WILL BE HAPPENING this year! With one modification, though. Instead of you bringing your kids to VBS, we’re bringing VBS to your kids.

This summer, on **Tuesday July 21<sup>st</sup> through Thursday, July 23<sup>rd</sup>**, we’ll be using a quarantine-friendly VBS called BOLT. With minimal preparation, easy-to-follow instructions, and a video that leads you and your kids step-by-step through each of the 3 days, BOLT is designed for you to perform with your family at home. It’s so simple!

During BOLT, your family will participate in fun games that illustrate what it means to listen to, focus on, and follow Jesus. Depending on your pace, you can expect that each day’s experience will last about an hour and a half. It’s great for kids preschool and up. Even middle and high school kids can enjoy it!

There’s something else we’re really excited about—this could also be an amazing outreach opportunity. If you feel comfortable gathering with more people, you can invite as many neighbors, friends, and family to your house for BOLT as you would like. It’s such an easy and fun way to share the good news of Jesus with our community.

We’re going to send the information to EVERYONE on my St. John’s contact list; if you know of anyone else who may be interested, LET ME KNOW! All we need is an email address to get a family started!

We’re kicking everything off on **Monday evening, July 20<sup>th</sup>**, with a **ZOOM meeting at 7:00!** Each evening of VBS, we’ll meet again at 7:00 (on Zoom) to see how your day went and for a VBS closing!

Then on **Friday, July 24<sup>th</sup>**, as soon as it gets dark enough, we’ll wrap up our BOLT VBS experience with a Drive-In Movie Night at St. John’s! It will be a week of VBS family fun!!

We’ll be sending you more information as we get closer to July 20<sup>th</sup>. In the meantime, get your family excited about BOLT. This is going to be SO MUCH FUN!

I can’t WAIT to get started!!

Miss Laurie



**St John Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**Congregational Council Minutes**  
**May 17, 2020**

The council meeting was called to order by President, Roy Henry. Pastor Tom opened the meeting with devotions and a prayer.

**Present:** Roy Henry, Carol Hassinger, Sandra Lamenza, Matt Williard, Barbara Bullock, Arlene Doyle, Dan Maurer, Ron Erb, Heidi Lehman, Lori Motter and Pastor Tom Bruner

**Excused Absence:** Darrell Denlinger

**Unexcused Absence:** Ken Koller

**Minutes:** Motion by Ron Erb and seconded by Dan Maurer to accept the March minutes with noted correction. Motion approved unanimously.

**Reception of Petitions and Communications:**

The monthly water inspections were completed and passed.

Premier at Susquehanna is facing some challenges because of the coronavirus. Pastor Tom will inquire as to the need to see if we can be of help.

**Pastor's Report:** Motion made by Carol Hassinger and seconded by Barb Bullock to accept the pastor's report. Motion approved unanimously

**Young Children Ministry Report:** Motion was made by Sandra Lamenza and seconded by Arlene Doyle to accept Miss Laurie's report. Motion approved unanimously.

**Treasurer's Report:** Motion made by Ron Erb and seconded by Heidi Lehman to accept the treasurer's report. Motion approved unanimously.

**Reports of Standing Committees:**

*Church Property:* There was no meeting, but the routine maintenance items have been taken care of. The sexton's house required some roof repairs.

*Finance:* No report

*Worship and Music:* No meeting. Confirmation ceremony scheduled for May 31 will be rescheduled for October 25 (Reformation Sunday) or November 1 (All Saints Day). The Bluegrass Band was also cancelled.

*Faith Formation Team:* No meeting, the gender event was rescheduled for October 18.

*Youth Ministry:* The group has not been meeting, they are looking to have some Zoom meetings through the summer to keep the group involved. The ELCA Youth Gathering in Minneapolis is still in question.

*Mutual Ministry:* No report. Will meet in July.

*Executive:* No report.

*Nominating:* No report

*History:* No report

**St John Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**Congregational Council Minutes**  
**May 17, 2020**

*Women of ELCA:* The convention has been cancelled and rescheduled for August of 2021. St John is the host.

*Strawberry Festival:* The Strawberry Festival has been cancelled. The first meeting for the 2021 festival was scheduled for Tuesday, March 2, 2021 at 7pm. The 2021 festival is tentatively scheduled for June 9, 2021.

**Unfinished Business:** A decision was made to continue the contact calls and notes that council members are making to our congregants since the coronavirus began.

**New Business:** There was some discussion about how to continue managing our worship throughout the coronavirus. The bishop's email was discussed which focused on things we can do to prepare for resuming service in the church. There was discussion about the sanitation requirements and options we need to consider. There was also some discussion about how to keep our Zoom services interesting.

**Next Council Meeting:** Next two council meetings are scheduled for June 14 and July 12 both immediately following the Sunday service.

**Adjournment:** Motion by Ron Erb and seconded by Dan Maurer to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Sandra Lenker Lamenys". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the "Respectfully submitted," text.

<u>Pastor's Office</u> <u>Hours:</u> Mon, Tues - 8:00 A.M.– 9:30 A.M.  Wed, Thurs - 8:00 A.M. – 12:00 Noon  Friday 8:00 A.M. – 9:30 A.M. <i>(Other times by  appointment)</i>	The Rev. Thomas Bruner, Jr.	Pastor	Stjohnhillchurch @frontier.com	717-362-9519 (O) 717-362-7895 (H)
	Laurie Little	Young Christians Minister	misslaurie.little @gmail.com	717-365-5099 (H) 717-571-5058 (C)
	Tammy Becker	Sexton	No Email	717-319-0703
	Judith Ferree	Organist	jjferree@epix.net	717-362-4228
	Carol Hubler	Choir Director	Mchubler @gmail.com	570-758-5052
	Rebecca Conte	Secretary	Rlkconte06 @gmail.com	570-262-2664
	Roy Henry	Council President	Henryfamily2004 @gmail.com	717-215-9837
	Fay Nichols	Prayer Chain Coordinator	Fnichols46 @comcast.net	717-329-7447

Physical Address (for deliveries): 215 St. John Road Elizabethtown, PA 17023

Mailing Address: P. O. Box 270 Berksburg, PA 17005

Church Website: [www.stjohnhillchurch.org](http://www.stjohnhillchurch.org)

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**P.O. Box 270**  
**Berksburg, PA 17005**