



# St. Johns Epistle

St. Johns Lutheran  
Church  
Berrysburg, PA

June 2020

Dear Friends in Jesus,

As we continue our journey through these unprecedented-in-our-lifetimes days, this St. John's Epistle once again reflects our inability to plan and schedule on the scale of a month at a time and so it once again does not include a Worship Schedule or a Calendar. (As I said last month, please be watching the weekly digital bulletin, and especially emails from Miss Laurie and from me, for news about upcoming events as we go along.) The other thing this newsletter does not include is the schedule of the many workdays leading up to our Annual Strawberry Festival, which has been cancelled for this year. Most likely, you had already heard that the pavilion will be quiet in the days leading up to and including June 10 but that we are extremely blessed to be able to do without the funds which would have been raised, thanks to the strong support we have received in recent Festivals and the careful stewardship of those funds raised. In prayerful hope we look forward to June of 2021...

BUT, please don't think that all is cancellation and gloom – far from it!! God, no different from any other time, has been active and on the move, leading us for instance to a new and vibrant worship life via the Zoom platform – at 9:30am on Sundays beginning May 24. If you haven't yet had a chance to give our Zoom worship a try, please do so!! Weekly log-in/call-in information is contained in my (for now weekly on Friday) congregational family update emails or please don't hesitate to contact me at any time for that information.

Starting on Sunday, June 7, both Miss Laurie and I will be leading a Zoom faith formation experience each Sunday morning from 8:45 to 9:15. The plan is that all interested persons will sign-in/call-in via Zoom as before, just at this new time, following which (via the magic of "Zoom Rooms") the older folks and adults will "go with" me for a time of Summer Bible Study and the younger folks will "go with" Miss Laurie for a SONDay Celebration. Then, at 9:15, we will "come back" from our rooms in time to catch up with everyone else who is signing in/calling in for worship at 9:30.

And plans are already being made for a different sort of Vacation Bible School experience in July and August (please see Miss Laurie's letter which follows mine for a sneak peek at how that might work) and Youth Group is beginning planning for Zoom activities as I write these lines, with much more to come on that!

The bottom line is that God is Good and Great and Gracious – absolutely no change there from pre-COVID-19 times. What has changed is that, no matter where we look, we can't escape the hard truth of just how much we are not in control of our lives and times (a truth which is also absolutely no different from pre-COVID-19 times, but which is now an in-our-faces reality 24/7), and that is getting increasingly hard to take. And so we all are getting increasingly cranky and stressed and frightened. And, when you add to that the voices of politicians who are not above using these times to score political points and the voices of media members who are always on the lookout for higher ratings, it makes for a real witches' brew of negativity and "un-love". Which is all the more reason why we absolutely must stay close to God and to God's Word and to each other as the People of God (at the very least via regular "Zooming" to worship)!

That is also all the more reason why we need to keep praying, maybe most especially the Prayer for a Pandemic which again follows this letter. I find that it helps me to keep me and my needs in perspective – not saying that my struggles or yours are small things or that they don't matter, but rather that, if we are going to pray as Jesus has taught us, we need to take the big view – the God view – which also has the effect of keeping my stuff and your stuff in perspective – a perspective we all need, especially now!

Thank you for your kindness in reading, and for your continued partnership in this congregational family ministry that we share, no matter how differently it may be done for now!

***PASTOR TOM***

### ***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.



*News from Miss Laurie  
Young Christians Minister*

CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Happy June, everyone! Call me crazy, but it feels like ordering on-line and getting take-out have become our new “normal”. We are “zooming” and emailing and face timing and finding all kinds of ways to stay connected. I’m even getting used to wearing a mask ... sort of.

In the midst of the tragedy brought on by the pandemic, God helps us cope. He gives us creative ways to deal with the uncertainty. He gives us glimpses of hope.

Here at St. John’s, we want to keep YOUR hopes up, too, so mark your calendars for the following upcoming events:

Beginning June 7th , we’re going to have SONday Celebration Zoom Time from 8:45 to 9:15 each Sunday morning before the 9:30 Zoom Worship Service!

On Wednesday, July 22<sup>nd</sup>, we’re planning a one-night, virtual VBS program on Zoom featuring Craft Time, Science Time, Bible Story Time and more! There will be music and fun activities for young people of all ages!

- We’re following that up with a Drive-In Movie Night on Friday, July 24<sup>th</sup>!
- Stay tuned for more videos with Sunny as well!

Mark your calendars and join us for the fun! We’ll keep you posted on the details! All our activities, of course, will be dependent upon the church’s recommendations on social distancing. But we WILL find ways to appropriately engage!!

Have an awesome June and keep the CELEBRATION, and HOPE, in your hearts!!

*Miss Laurie*

## *Book Discussion - Moving to summer and Zoom!*

We had a little break from book discussion, so we are now ready to start up again and do some summer reading and sharing! Many of you already have the book intended for April, which will now be our June selection. Everyone is welcome, so if you would like to participate and haven't joined us before, you can pick up a copy on the white shelf/case in the back of the fellowship hall. The selection for July, *Refuge* by Terry Tempest Williams, is also available there. (Let Ann know if we run out of books, and she'll order more.) We will gather in June by Zoom and until it is safe and comfortable for small groups to meet. The summer book schedule will be:

Monday, June 1	7:00	Open the Door: A Journey to the True Self by Joyce Rupp
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.

## *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!

## *Your Tithes and Offerings*

For as long as may be needed, when it comes to giving your tithes and offerings, there are two very simple options: 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!

## *Congratulations*

Our prayers and congratulations go to **Cory & Rachel Shade**, who were blessed with the safe and healthy birth of **Eleanor "Ella" Nicole** on May 1. Congratulations also to proud big sister **Amelia** and the proud grandparents and great-grandparents, **Sandra & Craig Shade** and **Ray & Joyce Matter!**

## *And Prayers of Condolence*

To **Tam Spicher**, along with **Kristen** and **Callie** and the other family members and loved ones of our Brother in Christ **Frank Titus**, who died on Wednesday, April 22, at the Polk Assisted Living facility in Millersburg, where he had been in declining health. In accordance with Frank's wishes, his memorial worship will be held at a later date to be determined, when it is again possible to safely hold a larger worship gathering.

# 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)



Congratulations to all of our Youth Group members for finishing the school year and leaping into summer! This year has been quite different and we are all so proud of you for getting through these challenging times!



We would also like to give special praise to our senior youth group member, **Cameron Thompson!** Cameron will be graduating from Halifax High School on June 5th, which happens to also be his father, Brian's birthday, what a great way to celebrate an amazing accomplishment on this day! Congratulations on your special day Cameron, the St. Johns family is so proud of you!

Upon Graduation Cameron will attend Millersville University to pursue a bachelor's degree in Music Education



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

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."*



## *Join Us via Zoom*

**So, do you have any plans for Wednesday, June 10, at 7:00 P.M.?** Seriously! Maybe planning to be at home with your feet propped up in front of the TV? Well, how about getting together with your congregational family and extended family via Zoom, exactly when we would have originally all been expecting to be coming down the home stretch at our Annual Strawberry Festival... but when, for the first time since 1976, the pavilion will instead be empty and quiet. For everyone who will not, maybe for the first time literally in decades, be running on Strawberry Festival Adrenaline right then, Pastor Tom is organizing an informal get together via Zoom for anyone and everyone who is able to drop by for between a half-hour and an hour (or as long as they are able to stay) at 7:00 P.M. on Wednesday, June 10. It won't be elaborate or complicated – only relaxed and hopefully just plain fun, including the following:

+Opening in prayer for our medical professionals at 7:00, as we have been doing now for many weeks, led by Pastor Tom

+A Strawberry Festival power point-type slide show put together by Roy & Rachel Henry (including the showing of the Festival DVD that was created some years ago and any photographs that anyone would be willing to share for the slide show **submitted digitally via email only – no actual photos to change hands – to the Henrys by the end of day Friday, June 5**)

+Time for any kind of sharing of Strawberry Festival memories that anyone might wish to do, at a time of everyone being unmuted

+An appearance by Miss Laurie (and YouTube sensation ***Sunny***)

+Special music

+A time of Corporate Prayer, led by Pastor Tom

Other things will likely be added as we get closer to time. For now, please **1.** Put it in your family calendar and pass the word to anyone else who may not be receiving this email, **2.** Remember to get those photographs – digital copies via email only to Roy and Rachel at: [henryfamily2004@gmail.com](mailto:henryfamily2004@gmail.com) by the end of the day on Friday, June 5, and **3.** Contact Pastor Tom by the end of day Monday, June 8, with any other things you would like to/be willing to include in the gathering.

## *Our Faith Active in our Financial Giving - As of April 30*

A number of folks have asked how we are doing financially as a congregational family, now two-plus months into life without in-person worship and other activities, and so Pastor Tom (the old accountant) has prepared the following summary for Congregational Council and this *Epistle*.

First, regarding our Current Fund... (The Current Fund is our fund from which most day-to-day bills get paid, much like your home's checking account.) With 17 of 52 Sundays behind us as of April 30, to be right on **budget**, we would have received **\$51,482** out of our total 2020 budget. Adjusting down the total funds we have received for the effects of some very kind whole-year offerings made at the beginning of the year, we have **received \$49,014** in true April 30 offerings and other income, meaning that we have a **shortfall of (\$2,468)**. This is in fact not the worst result we have ever had at this point in the year, with two years (2010 and 2006) where we had a bigger shortfall and two other years (2009 and 2008) where we had almost as much of a shortfall. So, considering this new reality with which we are all living of no in-person worship and offering plates, and the fact that we did not receive the typical Holy Week/Easter Day "bump", we are definitely holding our own!

As to the Children & Youth Ministry Fund, through which Miss Laurie's ministry is funded, we have **received \$7,065** in offerings and Thrivent Choice Dollars as of the end of April (again adjusting for some whole-year gifts shared at the beginning of the year), which is a **shortfall of just (\$772)** from our budget goal at April 30. Considering the fact that this is the first year in which we are challenging ourselves with a budget goal that doesn't include any support from any other congregational funds, and of course the realities of these COVID-19 times, we are once again doing quite well.

Finally, as to the gifts we share with our Lower Susquehanna Synod and our Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, to be exactly on **budget** as of April 30, we would have received and forwarded **\$3,923** out of our total 2020 commitment of \$12,000. As of April 30, we have **actually** received and shared a total of **\$4,747**, meaning that we are **ahead of** our commitment by **\$824** (but which is in large measure due to some whole-year gifts that are included in that total).

Thank you for your partnership in the ministry of St. John, and especially for your kindness in "going the extra mile" to mail or drop off your offerings in these challenging times! Please watch for future updates every few months, and please feel free at any time to ask questions of or share ideas with Treasurer Jamie Doyle, Pastor Tom or any member of Council.

**St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Congregational Council Meeting Minutes**

February 9, 2020

The Council Meeting was called to order by President Roy Henry at 4 P.M.

Pastor Tom offered prayer and devotion from the Sermon On the Mount – Salt of the Earth & Light of the World.

Excused absences: Dan Maurer, Ron Erb

Motion to accept the Minutes by Sandra Lamenza; second by Matt Williard; approved by all present.

**Reception of Petitions and Communications**

- Women of St John collecting items for child care to Life Line Pregnancy Ministry of Millersburg.
  - January water test passed by Pure Test.
  - Annual fire extinguisher and emergency lights test by Peifer.
  - January 3 a car was abandoned in the church parking lot. Waited 2 weeks; then salvage towed it away.
  - Annual letter from Kone Elevator – renewal on March 1.
  - Barry Williard arranged for the Lykens Valley Bluegrass Band to play at St. Johns on June 28 for an honorarium \$200.
  - On August 15 the Lower Susquehanna Synod Women will gather at St. Johns. Last held here 12 years ago.
  - Lenten schedule for Wednesdays in Lent – March 4 at St. Johns; meal at 6:15 PM Worship at 7:00 PM . Final service April 1.
- Theme – Preachers of the Gospel. Offering to Upper Dauphin Human Services of Lykens.

**Pastor's Report:**

- Attendance up from last year.
- On January 28 a meeting was held about the school merger by UDA and Millersburg. Feedback and concerns were discussed in focus groups.
- Motion to accept by Barb Bullock; second by Matt Williard; approved by all present.

**Children and Youth:**

- Excellent job by Laurie Little almost 3 years at St. Johns.
- Motion to accept by Heidi Lehman; second by Arlene Doyle; approved by all present.

**Treasurer Report:**

- Motion to accept by Matt Williard; second by Sandra Lamenza; passed by all present.

**Church Property:**

- Meeting In January
- Discussion about floor replacement for first floor activity room; getting estimates from 2 companies; vinyl plastic or carpet tiles/ squares.

**Worship & Music:**

- Meeting held January 21.
- Flower smell too strong; replace with dahlia.



**St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**Congregational Council Meeting Minutes**  
February 9, 2020

**Faith Formation Team:** no meeting

**Youth Ministry:**

- Today January 9 was Youth Sunday
- Indoor trampoline park in Harrisburg; 11 youth attended.
- March 21 – hot dogs and sausage stand at Mid-Penn Bank.
- Youth Gathering at Minneapolis, Minn. July 4, 2021.

**Mutual Ministry:**

- Meeting in April

**Women's Report:** report by Barb Bullock

- \$540 offering for snack pack at Breaking Bread
- Working on Synod Women's Meeting
- Aprons for women at church meals & events.

**Unfinished Business:**

- Synod Assembly – June 6 – looking for 2 members to attend – 1 male 1 female.

**New Business:**

- Beyond Binary Workshop at St. Johns April 19 from 1 to 3 P.M.
- Combine April and May Council Meeting on May 3 at 4 P.M.

Next Council Meeting March 8 at 4 PM.

Motion to adjourn by Heidi Lehman; second by Matt Williard; passed by all present.

Ended with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted,

Darrell Denlinger, Secretary

**St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Congregational Council Meeting Minutes**

March 8, 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, Ken Koller and Pastor Tom Bruner

**Excused Absence:** Darrell Denlinger, Lori Motter

**Minutes:** Motion by Ron Erb and seconded by Dan Maurer to accept the minutes with noted correction from the February 9, 2020. Motion approved unanimously.

**Reception of Petitions and Communications:**

The monthly water inspections were completed and passed.

Motion made by Barb Bullock and seconded by Arlene Doyle to approve the following funding requests of \$100 for the UDA post prom party and \$200 for the YMCA. Motion approved unanimously.

**Pastor's Report:** Motion made by Ken Koller and seconded by Ron Erb to accept the pastor's report. Motion approved unanimously

**Children and Youth Ministry Report:** Motion was made by Ron Erb and seconded by Matt Williard to accept Miss Laurie's report. Motion approved unanimously.

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

**Reports of Standing Committees:**

*Church Property:* Sandra Lamenza and Carl Baumgardner presented estimates from two separate companies for replacing the carpet in the social hall and three adjoining rooms. The property committee has recommended we accept the proposal from Fry's Flooring for the project. A subcommittee of four people were appointed to research and recommend a specific color and pattern. They will report back at the next property committee meeting.

Several maintenance issues have been taken care of. The two trees have been removed and it was recommended that we fill the oil tank now that oil prices are low.

*Finance:* No report

*Worship and Music:* No report, will meet in April.

*Faith Formation Team:* No report

*Youth Ministry:* The coin fundraiser was a success. Five youth and three advisers helped at the Eastern Star banquet. A Youth Fun Night is scheduled for Sunday, March 15. The Hot Dog/Sausage Stand in the Elizabethtown Mid Penn parking lot is scheduled for Saturday, March 21.

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

*Executive:* No report.

*Nominating:* No report

*History:* No report

**St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church**  
**Congregational Council Meeting Minutes**  
March 8, 2020

*Women of ELCA:* The Breaking Bread lunch featuring Pot Pie and Soup was a success with over \$600 donated to the Snack Pack Program. The women are planning for the convention, and they are looking into ordering new aprons with the St John logo.

*Strawberry Festival:* The first planning meeting was held March 3. The committee list was updated and added to the new website. The next meeting is April 27, 2020.

**Unfinished Business:** Pastor Tom is still looking for representatives to attend the Synod Assembly in June.

**New Business:** There was some discussion about security regarding the extra key that has been kept outside for members to use when the church door is locked. It appears that the location of the key is widely known, and a decision was made to remove the key. We also discussed the importance of locking the deadbolt lock on the pavilion doors.

There was some discussion regarding the COVID 19 virus and ways in which we could continue supporting our mission in the event we need to suspend services at the church.

**Next Council Meeting:** Next council meeting is scheduled for May 17 at 4PM.

**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 Lamenza". The signature is written in dark ink on a white background.

Sandra Lamenza, Assistant Secretary

<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)

***St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church***

**P.O. Box 270**

**Berksburg, PA 17005**