



# ST. JOHN'S EPISTLE

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

BERRYSBURG, PA MARCH 2021

## Letter from the Pastor

Dear Friends in Jesus,

As you read these lines, we will be just a week or two into the Season of Lent, which has its beginning on Ash Wednesday – this year February 17. That also means that it will very soon be a year (on March 8) since we last joined together in-person as a congregational family as “normal”, in faith formation activities for all ages, followed by worship, followed by the final **Breaking Bread** time of wonderful food and fellowship. I don't know about you, but I find that March 8 of last year feels more like almost a lifetime ago than almost a year ago, so much has changed.

That change hasn't been all negative, of course – far from it! In fact, what we and so many of our sister congregations have been pushed to do is figure out new ways to do the very same work of God, many of which will continue to strengthen our ministries even when we do eventually reach the “new normal” – something very in keeping with who our God is, as we see that God in action in our Bibles.

A year ago, as the first wave of the pandemic swept over us, we had just hosted the very first Wednesday community evening of supper and worship, with a large and boisterous crew excited to be together again for those beloved Wednesdays, never realizing that a week later we would be cancelling and that, for the whole rest of Lent, we wouldn't experience live worship of any kind. This year, thanks to a technology called “Zoom”, of which I at least had never heard as of this time a year ago, we are gathering and learning and worshipping and meeting and we are again making plans for what a return to in-person worship and other activities will look like for this next stretch until we arrive at something like a “new normal”.

A year ago, the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic had the effect of “blowing Lent out of the water”. We were all so surprised and then shocked that there was really almost no chance to react or adapt to our new reality. This year, that is not the case and, in fact, I would like to suggest that the reality of life with the pandemic gives us a rare opportunity to really experience the Season of Lent as never before. During our Ash Wednesday (Zoom) worship, you heard me say the following:

***We are created to experience joy in communion with God, to love one another, and to live in harmony with Creation. But our sinful rebellion separates us from God, our neighbors, and Creation, so that we do not enjoy the life our Creator intended.***

***As disciples of Jesus, we are called to a discipline that contends against evil and resists whatever leads us away from love of God and neighbor. I invite you, therefore, to the discipline of Lent – self-examination and repentance, prayer and fasting, sacrificial give, and works of love – strengthened by the gifts of Word and Sacrament.***

Think of Lent as a time of pruning -or- housecleaning -or- stripping away an old coating that has accumulated and come to hide the beauty beneath. Think of Lent as a time of just plain getting real – owning up to the fact that we aren't in charge of our lives or world and that, in trying to act as if we are, we have made a real mess of things – from global climate -to- national politics -to- unloving things that are being done and said right here in our local communities.

It turns out there's maybe nothing like a pandemic (at least maybe nothing that you and I have experienced so far in our relatively sheltered lives) to force us to step back from everything we normally use and do to try to keep up the appearance of being in charge – all of the plans, all of the possessions, all of the pretending that life is just going to automatically go on tomorrow the same as today and yesterday. ***In other words, for you and me, it turns out that maybe there's nothing like a pandemic to force us to focus on what really matters and to just plain get real. For you and me, it turns out that there's maybe nothing like a pandemic to force us to get straight Who is God and who isn't.***

The Season of Lent will run almost all of the way through this coming month. So, instead of getting down about everything that isn't yet back to "normal" or as we would like it to be, Lent is the perfect opportunity to join with the rest of your congregational family to "lean into" the times – to seize the opportunity – to seize the moment – to be open as maybe you never have been before – to look and ask first where God is leading and pointing YOU... where God is counting on YOU... where God is blessing YOU!

***Pastor Tom***

## **News from Miss Laurie, Young Christians Minister**

Happy March, everyone! I know the groundhog predicted 6 more weeks of winter, but I'm anxiously awaiting the arrival of SPRING this month – and hopefully some more spring-like weather!!!

In addition to spring, here are a few things to look forward to this month:

- A return to IN-PERSON SONday Celebration starting **Sunday, March 7th!** We'll continue to mask, social distance and limit our activities to our Celebration space. And we'll use the side door on the south side of the building to enter and leave our space. See you at St. John's each Sunday at 9:00 – we're going LIVE!
- SONday Celebration on Zoom will run concurrently with our in-person experience if you'd rather participate virtually! You can join the recurring Zoom meeting - hosted by Jamie Doyle – each week, by clicking on: <https://zoom.us/j/94870256130?pwd=cC9YR1drQXFrcWlvd2RUZTRIY2VnZz09>
- **Sunday, March 7th** - We'll also be bringing back Celebration Time for the kids during the worship service! We'll remain in the Celebration space for the entire service and meet the parents in the foyer following worship!
- **Wednesday, March 3rd** – our next meeting of Celebration Club. This activity will also be IN-PERSON at the church! Join us at 6:30 as we "Move" for Jesus!
- **Sunday, March 14th** – "End of the Rainbow" SONday Celebration with some St. Patrick's Day fun!
- **Sunday, March 21st** – Pastor Tom and I will hold another Drive-by Communion at 11:30 following worship.
- **Sunday, March 28th** – "Palm Sunday" SONday Celebration! Join us for the beginning of Holy Week as we herald Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem!

It's going to be a great month – come and be part of ALL the celebrations!!! (And keep your fingers crossed for SPRING!!)

***Miss Laurie***

## Annual Strawberry Festival – 1<sup>st</sup> Planning Meeting

The first planning meeting for our Annual Strawberry Festival will be held on Zoom on Tuesday, March 2, beginning at 7:00 P.M. All interested persons are invited to attend. ***Clearly, our first order of business will be to assess whether it makes sense to go any further in planning for June 9 or not, in view of where we are likely to be by then with regard to the pandemic, even with the ongoing vaccination effort.***

## Book Club

**Next Up for Book Discussion Group** is a gathering via Zoom on **Monday, March 8, at 7:00 P.M.** Everyone is welcome, so if you would like to participate and haven't joined in before, you can pick up a copy of the current book, **Night** by Nobel Peace Prize Laureate Elie Wiesel, on the bench under the bulletin board in the foyer, just inside the main doors. The book, which is both an account of Wiesel's survival of the Nazi death camps as a teenager as well as a deep wrestling with such questions as how human beings can do such things to each other and where is God in it all, is widely viewed as Wiesel's masterpiece. Please let Ann know if we run out of books, and she'll order more. Also, please get in touch with her if you have any other questions – 717.362.7895 or [rahbruner@gmail.com](mailto:rahbruner@gmail.com).)

## Thank You!!

To the following persons who directed Thrivent Choice Dollars to St. John during 2020: Sheila Barder, Fay Bixler, Barb Bullock, Delmar & Ginny Enders, Larry Gessner, Carol Hassinger, Harold & Pat Herb, and Mary Peters. A total of \$1,538 was received and passed on to the support of such ministries as WELCA blanket making, children and youth ministry, youth group, and our ELCA World Hunger Appeal. Thank you! ***(And a reminder to all Thrivent members that March 31 will be the cutoff to designating 2020 Choice Dollars. A phone call to Thrivent – or logging in to the Thrivent website – is all that it takes to find out about and direct Choice Dollars.)***

## Camp!

Even though summer is still months away, our Camperson **Amy Gehring** has already attended the annual online orientation held by our synodical Lutheran Camping Corporation. Exact plans for the summer camping season are still being worked out by leaders at Mt. Luther, Nawakwa and Kirchenwald, as guided by the American Camping Association, so please stay tuned for further information. If, as hoped, a summer camping season is able to go forward, please don't forget that, for folks attending a summer camping experience who are on the rolls of membership of the St. John congregational family, our congregational family will pay a portion of the registration fee, making an already affordable experience that much more of a bargain!

## Upcoming Summer Dates

Staying on the subject of tentative summer plans and activities, some other dates for your family calendars:

- **May 30** – the first Sunday of early summer (9:30am) worship
- **May 30, June 20, July 4, July 11, July 25, August 15, and September 5** – the dates of worship outdoors in our beautiful pavilion setting
- **June 25** – Drive-in Movie Night with Miss Laurie
- ***Knights of North Castle*** Vacation Bible School – Monday, **July 19**, through Friday, **July 23**, with a drive-in movie on closing night and the closing program on Sunday, **July 25**, followed by “Voices and Vittles”
- **August 6** – Water Fun Night with Miss Laurie

# St. John's Youth Group

## Youth Group Meeting:

Our next youth group meeting will be another Zoom meeting on Sunday, March 21, 2021 from 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Come one, come all! We will have devotional time and then play a game. The game stats are as follows:

- ASK GOOGLE game winner: R.J. Henry = Prize: COVID Care Package
- FAMILY FEUD game winner: R.J. Henry = Prize: Hershey's Candy Mix
- SCAVENGER HUNT game winner: Gary Leitzel = Prize: 24 Tootsie Pops, with Bonus Valentines
- MOBILE SCAVENGER HUNT game winner: Gabe Gehring = Prize: 5 lbs. of animal crackers

With Council making the decision to go back to in-person services, we will be in-person for our Youth Group Sunday school class again. Join Matt and Olivia each Sunday morning at 9:00am in the choir loft in the balcony.

As the days get longer and the weather warms up, we will have the chance to get together outside in the pavilion for youth meetings. Fingers crossed, our April meeting will be in the sunshine! Watch your email and the newsletter for more information.

Have a marvelous March!! God bless!

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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 Website: [www.elca.org/youthgathering](http://www.elca.org/youthgathering)



## 2022 ELCA Youth Gathering Theme (July 24-28, 2022)

The ELCA Youth Gathering team announces the theme of the 2022 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."

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***GOD IS STILL WRITING YOUR STORY. QUIT TRYING TO STEAL THE PEN AND TRUST THE AUTHOR.***

-Thank you to **Fay Nichols** for sharing

# St John Evangelical Lutheran Church

## Congregational Council Minutes

### January 10, 2021

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

**Present:** Roy Henry, Sandra Lamenza, Matt Williard, Ron Erb, Heidi Lehman, Lori Motter, Ira Antes, Michael Henninger, Dana Klouser, Sheila Barder, and Pastor Tom Bruner

**Excused Absence:** Ken Koller

**Absent:** Arlene Doyle

#### **Election of Officers:**

- President – Roy Henry - Motion by Sandra Lamenza seconded by Ron Erb. Motion approved unanimously.
- Vice President – Matt Williard – Motion by Ron Erb seconded by Ira Antes. Motion approved unanimously.
- Secretary – Sandra Lamenza – Motion by Ron Erb seconded by Heidi Lehman. Motion approved unanimously.
- Assistant Secretary – Lori Motter – Motion by Heidi Lehman seconded by Ron Erb. Motion approved unanimously.
- Treasurer – Jamie Doyle. No election necessary.
- Assistant Treasurer – Heidi Lehman – Motion by Ron Erb seconded by Lori Motter. Motion passed unanimously.
- Cemetery Association Representative – Sandra Lamenza

**Minutes:** Motion by Ron Erb and seconded by Lori Motter to accept the December minutes. Motion approved unanimously.

#### **Reception of Petitions and Communications:**

Water testing inspection was passed for December.

A thank you note was received from Linda Zelinski for hosting the Lutheran Youth Organization Conference. The LYO prepared school kits for the Lutheran Youth Relief.

**Pastor's Report:** Motion made by Matt Williard 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 Sandra Lamenza to accept Miss Laurie's report. Motion approved unanimously.

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

#### **Reports of Standing Committees:**

*Many of the committees have not been meeting due to the COVID 19 pandemic. Any business that needed attention has been handled through phone calls.*

*Church Property:* No meeting. Will meet January 26, 2021.

*Finance:* No report

*Worship and Music:* No report

*Faith Formation Team:* No report

*Youth Ministry:* They have had game time events on Zoom.

*Mutual Ministry:* Met January 10. Discussed the success of Zoom worship and expressed appreciation for Roy and Rachael Henry for leading this effort.

*Executive:* No report

*Nominating:* No report

*History:* No report

*Women of ELCA:* No report

**COVID 19:**

After a discussion it was agreed that we would discontinue in-person worship services until at least March 7. It will be reviewed monthly at council meetings. Roy Henry will continue to work of finalizing plans for the combined Zoom/In-person services.

Pastor Tom will update the call list, and council members will reach out to contact members during this time of COVID isolation.

**Next Council Meeting:** The next council meeting will be February 14 following the Zoom worship service.

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

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandra Lamenza". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Sandra Lamenza, Secretary

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
		7pm – Strawberry Festival Planning Meeting #1 (On Zoom)	6:30pm-8pm – Monthly Celebration Club with Miss Laurie (In-Person at Church) 6:30-7:30pm – <b>People of the Passion</b> (On Zoom) 7pm – Weekly Congregational Family Time of Prayer for Medical Professionals, Educators, Students & Their Families			Pastor Tom's Weekly Day Off
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent</b> 9am - Faith Formation Time (Adult Bible Study on Zoom; Younger Groups In-Person at the Church) 10:15am – Worship Including Holy Communion ( <u>Both</u> In-Person at the Church <u>and</u> on Zoom)	7pm – Monthly Gathering of Book Discussion Group (on Zoom)	<b>Day of Prayer for Peace with Justice, Beginning in the Middle East</b>	6:30-7:30pm – <b>People of the Passion</b> (On Zoom) 7pm – Weekly Congregational Family Time of Prayer for Medical Professionals, Educators, Students & Their Families			Pastor Tom's Weekly Day Off
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent</b> 9am - Faith Formation Time (Adult Bible Study on Zoom; Younger Groups In-Person at the Church) 10:15am – Worship Including Holy Communion ( <u>Both</u> In-Person at the Church <u>and</u> on Zoom) 4pm - Congregational Council Meeting (on Zoom) <b>Daylight Saving Time Begins</b>	7pm – Upper Dauphin Conference Spring Assembly  <b>Deadline to Submit Items for April "St. John's Epistle"</b>	6:15pm – Worship & Music Committee Meeting (On Zoom) 7pm – Faith Formation Team Gathering (On Zoom)	6:30-7:30pm – <b>People of the Passion</b> (On Zoom) 7pm – Weekly Congregational Family Time of Prayer for Medical Professionals, Educators, Students & Their Families  <b>St. Patrick's Day</b>		<b>Joseph, Guardian of Jesus</b>	Pastor Tom's Weekly Day Off  <b>Spring Begins</b>
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
<b>5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent</b> 9am - Faith Formation Time (Adult Bible Study on Zoom; Younger Groups In-Person at the Church) 10:15am – Worship Including Holy Communion ( <u>Both</u> In-Person at the Church <u>and</u> on Zoom) 11:30am – "Drive Through" Holy Communion with Pastor Tom & Miss Laurie at the Church	Pastor Tom Taking Monthly Extra Day Off	6:15pm – Property Committee Meeting (On Zoom)	6:30-7:30pm – <b>People of the Passion</b> (On Zoom) 7pm – Weekly Congregational Family Time of Prayer for Medical Professionals, Educators, Students & Their Families			Pastor Tom's Weekly Day Off
28	29	30	31			
<b>Sunday of the Passion/Palm Sunday</b> 9am - Faith Formation Time (Adult Bible Study on Zoom; Younger Groups In-Person at the Church) 10:15am – Worship Including Holy Communion ( <u>Both</u> In-Person at the Church <u>and</u> on Zoom)						

## Pastor Tom's Office Hours

Monday, Tuesday: 8am – 9:30am

Wednesday, Thursday: 8am – 12 noon

Friday: 8am - 9:30am

(Other times by appointment)

## Contact Information

The Rev. Thomas Bruner, Jr., Pastor	<a href="mailto:stjohnhillchurch@frontier.com">stjohnhillchurch@frontier.com</a>	717-362-9519 (O) 717-362-7895 (H)
Laurie Little, Young Christians Minister	<a href="mailto:misslaurie.little@gmail.com">misslaurie.little@gmail.com</a>	717-365-5099 (H) 717-571-5058 (C)
Lewis Weaver, Sexton	<a href="mailto:bootsdagreat@gmail.com">bootsdagreat@gmail.com</a>	570-809-1014
Grace Weaver, Sexton	No Email	570-809-1510
Judith Ferree, Organist	<a href="mailto:jferree@epix.net">jferree@epix.net</a>	717-362-4228
Carol Hubler, Choir Director	<a href="mailto:mchubler@gmail.com">mchubler@gmail.com</a>	570-758-5052
Rachel Henry, Secretary	<a href="mailto:henryfamily2004@gmail.com">henryfamily2004@gmail.com</a>	717-439-3897
Roy Henry, Council President	<a href="mailto:henryfamily2004@gmail.com">henryfamily2004@gmail.com</a>	717-215-9837
Fay Nichols, Prayer Chain Coordinator	<a href="mailto:fnichols46@comcast.net">fnichols46@comcast.net</a>	717-329-7447

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