



ST. JOHN'S EPISTLE

ST. JOHN'S EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

BERRYSBURG, PA SEPTEMBER 2021

Dear Friends in Jesus,

As the coming month of September marks the transition from summer to autumn, this year it also marks yet another step in our ongoing journey toward our COVID "new normal". Things are again being planned for this September that were cancelled last year because of health concerns but, as I write these lines in mid-August, you and I are also seeing many conflicting and rapidly-changing signs about where we might be headed COVID-wise by the time we actually reach September. SO... I'm going to use this space this month to highlight some of the many things which are being scheduled (on Sundays) once again or, in some cases, for the first time, BUT please don't forget that there is a tentativeness to it all, especially the further we get into the new month. So please keep an eye out for Miss Laurie's and my weekly emails as well as our weekly bulletins for the latest updates. (And Youth Group members – please be sure to watch your inbox for Olivia's update emails!)

Sunday, September 5

We will be following our summer schedule on this holiday weekend, worshipping outdoors in the beauty of our pavilion and concluding with a time of "drive-through/walk-up" Holy Communion with Miss Laurie and me.

Sunday, September 12

On this annual "Celebration Sunday" I will lead a combined Adult Bible Study on our summer schedule, from 8:45 A.M. to 9:15 A.M. Our worship at 9:30 A.M. will be a "SONDay Celebration" worship as we prepare to transition back to our fall schedule, including a Sunny Sermon by Miss Laurie, a **Knights of North Castle** VBS slideshow by Nicole Radel, and our **Annual Blessing of the Backpacks & Devices** led by me (for which all students – Preschool through Grade 12 – are asked to bring along their school backpacks (or devices) for a time of recognition, blessing, and prayer, as a new school year gets underway). When our worship ends at 10:30 A.M., it will be time to head out for our congregational outing to Knoebel's – which we of course missed last year – where everyone attending will gather with their covered dish and container of drink for sharing to join in lunch together, followed by plenty of time for riding. Our younger members will have some ride tickets provided.

Sunday, September 19

As per our annual practice, we will return to our "rest of the year" Sunday morning schedule, but with a twist this year. Faith Formation activities for all ages will return to **9:00am**, including Adult Bible Study, Youth Group Bible Time, Confirmation Class, and SONDay Celebration with Miss Laurie. And worship will follow at 10:15am, but outdoors in our beautiful pavilion one final time, SO THAT we can go right to a **Welcome Back Picnic** immediately following the close of worship, hosted by Youth Group. Everything will be provided by Youth Group – all you need to bring is your appetite!

Sunday, September 26

After consulting with our gracious hosts, **Lynn & Helen Henninger**, the three of us agreed that it would probably be best to hold off one more year on holding our Annual Square Dance in their barn. With the huffing and puffing in close quarters that this wonderful evening involves, there didn't seem to be any good way to easily and safely adapt it. Please mark your calendars for Sunday, September 25, 2022!

Thank you for reading and, especially, thank you in advance for keeping an eye out for updates. Our God is a great and gracious God and is very much on the job just like always, and we will go forward together toward that blessed future that God intends!

Pastor Tom

News from Miss Laurie, Young Christians Minister

Where did the summer go?! September is here and that, along with Labor Day and back to school, unofficially marks the end of summer in my mind. I hope you were all able to safely enjoy (get those vaccinations) the things that make summer special!!

It was a GREAT summer here on the "Hill" with lots of fun activities! Now we look to safely go forward (get those vaccinations) as we prepare to begin a new church year!!

To get the month started, join us for **our first Celebration Club** of the year! We're "kicking things off" on Wednesday, **September 1st**! Join us from **6:30 to 8:00** for the fun!

Remember, Celebration Club meets the first Wednesday of each month from September through May. The Clubbers" have a ball hearing Bible stories, learning scripture and participating in LOTS of activities that reinforce the lesson of the day! Each meeting is like a mini VBS! Mark your calendars and plan to join us EACH month for the fun!

On Sunday, **September 12th**, at **9:00** we mark the end of the summer schedule with a special "**Celebration Service**" in worship! During the service, Pastor Tom will offer a "**Blessing of the Backpacks**" and there will be a "Sunny Sermon" too. Nicole Radel is also putting together a power point presentation of highlights from this year's VBS – "Knight's of North Castle"! You won't want to miss this one, folks!

Immediately after the service, we'll head up to Elysburg for our annual **Congregational Picnic and Knoebel's Grove Outing**! Bring a covered dish to share with the group and something to drink – we'll meet at Pavilion "D" and share a picnic lunch. When we're finished eating, we'll "release the troops" into the park, and **all youth will receive a book of tickets to enjoy!** Plan to join your church family and be part of the food, fellowship, and fun!!

On the following Sunday – September 19th – we'll return to our regular schedule with SONday Celebration from 9:00–10:00 and Celebration Time for children 3 through 4th grade during worship. As we start the new church year, help your child grow in faith by joining us each week and being part of the Celebration!!

See you in September (and get those vaccinations)!!

Miss Laurie

You are Invited to Book Discussion and Fellowship!

Monthly times of reading and sharing continue in the beauty of our pavilion. Next up:

Monday, September 13, 6:30 P.M – When Women Were Birds by Terry Tempest Williams

Everyone is welcome, so if you would like to participate and haven't joined in before, you can borrow a physical or e-copy of the current book at your local library or pick up a copy at church - on the bench under the bulletin board in the foyer, just inside the main doors. Please let Ann know if we run out of books, and she will locate more. Questions? Call or email Ann at 717-362-7895 or rahbruner@gmail.com.

Confirmation Classes

On Sunday morning, September 19, those baptized members of St. John who are in at least 7th Grade and who have not yet been confirmed will begin a new year of study with Pastor Tom. The focus this year will be a close-up look at Martin Luther's ***Small Catechism*** as well as what it means to be a Lutheran Christian. One of our young members is in her second of two years of study, leading toward her Confirmation next year on the Day of Pentecost, while two other young persons will begin a first year of study.

Women's Group

33rd Convention of the Lower Susquehanna Synod Women of the ELCA

On September 25, 2021, St. John's Women's Group will be hosting the **Annual Convention for the Lower Susquehanna Synod Women of the ELCA**.

If you are not planning to attend that doesn't mean you can't help! We would like to ask our congregation for help in attaining food items for our seminarians. We are collecting the following items:

Cans of Chunky Soups (any kind, Cans of Tuna, Cans of Chicken, SPAM, Cans of Salmon, Cans of Mackerel, Any other meat items in a can. Also, Gift Cards to be used for gas and prescriptions. Gift cards should come from Weis Market, Giant Stores, or Walmart.

We will be collecting these items in the Conference Room near the window until September 22, 2021. Thank you for your help!

Soup Sale

The Women's group will be having a cold Soup Sale in the Fall - more information coming soon!

Amazon Smiles

If you are an Amazon.com shopper, our congregation is registered with the "Amazon Smiles" program, whereby Amazon donates one half of one percent of your purchase amount to a charitable organization that you select. Please note that, to qualify, your purchase has to be made through the "smile" side of things, to which you will find a very easily identifiable link from the main part of the Amazon.com website. (Once there, it can be a bit tricky to pick out our congregational name from all of the "St. John's" – look for **St John Evangelical Lutheran Church, Berrysburg, PA**. Once you have selected us the first time, we will automatically be designated each time you shop and you won't need to re-do the search.) All monies received in this way will be automatically deposited for use in the Current Fund.

St. John's Youth Group

St. John's Facebook: facebook.com/stjohnhillchurch

St. John's Children and Youth Ministry: facebook.com/childrenandyouthministry

ELCA Gathering Website: www.elca.org/youthgathering



Hello everyone! As summer is starting to wind down and we all start thinking about going back to school, we also look forward to the start of another youth group year. This September we invite all the new 5th graders to youth group!! Welcome to all of you!

Just to give you some general youth group information:

- Youth group is open to everyone from 5th grade to 12th grade.
- The advisors are Amy and Clint Gehring, Olivia and Matt Williard, and Pastor Tom.
- We try to meet at least one time per month.
- There is a youth group Faith Formation class every Sunday morning at 9:00 a.m. in the youth room.
- The youth room is on the north side of the balcony level of the church.
- Youth group announcements can be found in the newsletter, the bulletin, but most often through email.

All Parents: It is that time of year again to update the medical form we have on file. Please check your email for a copy of the medical form. This form is kept in a secure file for the advisors to use if an emergency would occur while your youth group member is in our care.

September 19th – A Busy Youth Group Day 😊

Welcome Back Picnic

September 19th marks the first Sunday back to complete normal for faith formation time and church service. To celebrate this reunion of our church family, the youth group will be hosting a welcome back picnic. The youth group will be providing the main course of hot dogs, hamburgers, and sides. We will be collecting a free will offering for the youth group. Church service will be outside in the pavilion that day. **The picnic will follow immediately afterwards.**

The youth group will meet at the normal 9:00 a.m. for faith formation time and set-up of the pavilion. Any prep work for the picnic will be done at that time. Please remember to wear a Thrivent t-shirt or a youth group t-shirt. If you need either one of these, please see one of the advisors.

Lutheran Youth Organization (LYO)

The annual LYO packing of the school kits will be **Sunday, September 19th at 3:00 p.m.** in our pavilion. Please let Olivia know what size shirt you wear. Pat Herb has graciously offered to use one of her Thrivent Action Teams to purchase the notebooks St. John's is supplying for the school kits. Because of her Action Team, we each get a nifty, dark grey Thrivent shirt. Woo hoo! They are SOOOO COMFY!!! We will be joining youth from other area churches to pack the school kits. As long as COVID restrictions don't change, we will be sharing pizza for dinner.

Hope to see everyone on September 19th, if not before! We wish you all the best for your upcoming school year!!!



Pastoral Acts

At Graveside

Pastor Tom presided at funeral worship on July 23 for **Marie Farner**, who died at her Halifax-area home on July 13, where she had been on hospice care. Worship began at St. Peter Lutheran, Rt. 225 Halifax, which had been Marie's congregational home for many years, and ended at St. John (where Marie had begun her faith journey in baptism and to which she returned for the end of that journey) at graveside in our cemetery. We pray God's comfort in the promise of the Resurrection of Jesus for Marie's family members and other loved ones!

Our Faith Active in Our Financial Giving – as of June 30

After concluding the year 2020 with very strong giving of tithes and offerings, despite all of the COVID-related impacts to our congregational family life together, the first half of 2021 has continued to see us all pulling together in very solid fashion in giving to God's work in this place as a congregational family. Here are summaries of our three largest funds for the first six months of 2021 – the **Current Fund** (much like your main checking account at home, from which most of the day-to-day bills of ministry get paid), the **Children & Youth (C&Y) Fund** (through which Miss Laurie's ministry is funded), and our **Larger Church Benevolence** (through which our congregational family supports the work of our Lower Susquehanna Synod and Evangelical Lutheran Church in America on all of our behalf):

	Current	C&Y	Larger Church Benevolence
June 30 Budget Goal	\$76,125	\$12,166	\$6,000
June 30 Total Giving*	\$82,615	\$15,738	\$7,079
June 30 Giving Adjusted for Lump Sum Gifts*	\$73,415	\$13,438	\$6,079
June 30 Total Expenses	\$65,733	\$12,721	\$7,079 [^]

* Our Total Giving reflects the kindness of several folks who shared all of their 2021 offerings right at the beginning of the year. The "Adjusted" line subtracts out the ½ of these advance gifts which applies to the months July through December still to come.

[^] With our Larger Church Benevolence, we simply send on exactly what we receive each month, and so the Total "Expenses" equal the Total Giving.

The above information is based on a summary which Pastor Tom (putting on his "CPA Hat") shares each month with Congregational Council. Please don't hesitate to ask him any questions you might have about these numbers. For questions about the details of our giving or our expenses, please speak with **Treasurer Jamie Doyle**. Thank you for your partnership in this wonderful ministry which is St. John! Please watch for future updates every few months. (And please remember that, if you are not able for any reason to take part in in-person worship, there are three very simple options for giving your tithes and offerings. You are welcome to **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 that is prominently visible in the Sunday School Room, on the table just outside Pastor Tom's office door. In addition, **3.** if neither of those is easily done, you may wish to contact your bank about setting up an automatic payment, as some of our congregational family members also have done, whereby the offering you direct is sent by your bank as a check mailed directly to the church. In all cases, Pastor Tom will then see that all offerings received get securely passed along to our counters.)

As we look back on this year's Annual Strawberry Festival, held June 9 after a first-ever year "away", it was easily the most unusual Festival since the modern event was reconstituted in 1976. We were dealing with a take-out only format never before attempted – this a last-minute change (as COVID realities were quickly changing) from an initially-planned drive through only format, also never before attempted. This meant the loss

of many of the parts of the normal onsite event that draw people each year, such as musical entertainment. And then, to top it all off, we were faced with one of the more difficult weather days we have had, with rain and wind which saw pop-up tents and shelters carried aloft and, in at least one case, destroyed. Through it all, the St. John congregational family persevered, our community turned out to support our efforts, and, most importantly, God blessed us with joyful fellowship, safety, and monies received which, when all was said and done, totaled **\$18,073.00** (understandably about \$8,000 less than the 2019 all-time record total). Deducting our total expenses of **\$9,925.24** (which were only \$500 or so less than in a typical year because, even as we saved on expenses like entertainment, we incurred brand new expenses for things like many more take-out containers), left us with net proceeds of **\$8,147.76**, which were less than 2019's record by about \$7,500. This **\$8,000+** added to the "Bicentennial"/Strawberry Festival Fund represents a whole lot of important ministry which could not be taking place in the next year were it not for the efforts of all who helped in any way. THANK YOU ALL!!

And looking ahead to 2022: Please mark your family calendars for next year's Festival, already scheduled for Wednesday, June 8. Also, the first planning meeting for next year's Festival, open to all interested persons, will be held on Tuesday, March 1, beginning at 7:00 P.M. at the church.

And Continuing with the Theme of Thankfulness...

A big thank you to **Sheila Barder** and **Camie Leitzel** for coordinating this year's Yard Sale to Benefit Lutheran Disaster Response, which ended up raising a total of **\$1,207.50**, all of which will be sent on to help in Jesus' Name those who are victims of natural or human-created disasters. Camie and Sheila, in turn, would like to express their thankfulness to the congregational family for all of the really nice and saleable items which were donated this year and for all of the other support of their efforts, including all those who turned out on Monday, August 2, to help with the packing up and delivering of the leftovers. As Sheila and Camie expressed it, that clean-up was wrapped up in record time! ONCE AGAIN, THANK YOU ALL!!

Congratulations!

To **Kenneth Herb** and **Nina Porter**, who were joined in holy matrimony Saturday, July 3, 2021 in Stevensville, Maryland. Nina Porter is the youngest daughter of Kenneth and Marcia Porter, Greensboro, MD. Kenneth is the oldest son of **Tim & Jody Herb**, Denton, MD and grandson of **Harold & Pat Herb**. The grandparents along with the whole Motter family traveled to Maryland for the event. Multiple storms rolled through prior to and during the event, blessing the young couple with sunshine and showers and a most memorable day. If anyone in the St. John's congregational family would like to send Kenneth and Nina a card or note, their address is: Kenneth and Nina Herb, 2780 Meadowbrook Road, Federalsburg, MD 21632.

And to new parents **Miana & Matt Gessner** on the safe and healthy (and very dramatic) birth of **Kyrah Elaine-Marie** at 6:15am on July 27. As (Mom) Miana tells the story (in very non-dramatic fashion), "we didn't quite make it to the hospital in time" and Kyrah ended up being born in the car just off the Mountain Road exit of Rts. 22/322, all 7 pounds, 11 ounces and 20 inches of her. After a precautionary trip by ambulance to the hospital for mother and baby (no easy thing for brand-new father, Matt, trying to tell the 911 dispatcher his "address" there on the roadside) and some time in the hospital, everyone (including big brother **Axten**) is back home and and doing well, for which we all certainly give thanks. And of course we all want to stay tuned for the book and perhaps a movie as well! 😊 And, just in case you would be sending a card, please note that Miana and Matt's address has changed since our most recent congregational directory went to print – they now live at: 356 North Road, Elizabethville, 17023.

Congratulations, too, to the Herb and Motter and Enders and Gessner families!

St John Evangelical Lutheran Church

Congregational Council Minutes

May 16, 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, Matt Williard, Sandra Lamenza, Ira Antes, Lori Motter, Ron Erb, Michael Henninger, Dana Klouser, Sheila Barder, Arlene Doyle, and Pastor Tom Bruner

Excused Absences: Heidi Lehman

Resignation: Ken Koller submitted a resignation letter to council. Motion was made by Sandra Lamenza and seconded by Arlene Doyle to accept his resignation and ask the Nominating Committee to recommend a replacement for the remainder of his term through 2022. Motion approved by majority with one opposition.

Minutes: Motion by Ron Erb and seconded by Arlene Doyle to accept the April minutes. Motion approved unanimously.

Reception of Petitions and Communications:

Water testing inspection was passed for April.

A motion was made by Pastor Tom and seconded by Dana Klouser to contribute \$500 to the Berrysburg Community Fire Company. Motion approved unanimously.

Pastor's Report: Pastor Tom requested vacation time for October 11 through October 26 and December 27 through January 5. Sunday services will be covered by Matt Williard and Jim Watson. Motion made by Sandra Lamenza and seconded by Matt Williard to accept the pastor's requested vacation time. Motion approved unanimously. Motion made by Ron Erb and seconded by Michael Henninger to accept the pastor's report. Motion approved unanimously.

Children and Youth Ministry Report: Motion was made by Sandra Lamenza and seconded by Michael Henninger to accept Miss Laurie's report. Motion approved unanimously.

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

Reports of Standing Committees:

Church Property: The committee reported that various projects have been completed. These include but are not limited to the pipe organ repair, steeple stars, emergency lighting, lawn tractor service, repairs at the sexton's house, and rain gutters on the pavilion. The replacement of the pavilion curtains will be completed before the Strawberry Festival.

Finance: No report

Worship and Music: No report

Faith Formation Team: No report

Youth Ministry: The youth group had a successful in-person game night. They are starting discussion about the 2022 national youth gathering.

Mutual Ministry: No report

Executive: No report

Nominating: No report

History and Archive: The St John Confirmation photo project is almost complete after having secured over 70% of the confirmation photos dating back to 1891.

Women of ELCA: Started a small-scale return to blanket making.

Strawberry Festival: With the recently revised CDC COVID recommendations there was some discussion about how that would affect the Strawberry Festival and if we could consider eliminating the drive through and going back to the sit-down system. Motion was made by Arlene Doyle and seconded by Ron Erb to give the Strawberry Festival Committee the OK to make that change if they found it to be attainable at this late date. Motion approved unanimously.

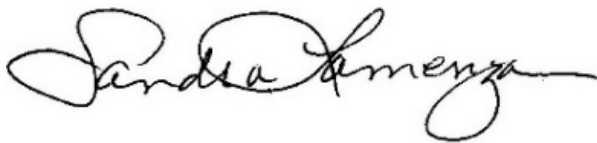
New Business: The revised CDC COVID recommendation regarding mask wearing and social distancing was also discussed as it relates to worship services. A motion was made by Pastor Tom to follow the new guidelines. All vaccinated attendees will not be required to wear a mask. All social distancing signs and barriers will be removed. Worship will continue with Zoom as an option. Motion was seconded by Ron Erb. Motion approved unanimously. Pastor Tom requested that each council member reach out to some of the members on their call list to share the news of the change in restrictions and encourage them to return to worship services.

The next council meeting will include a lesson on ringing the bell as the ushers will take on the responsibility of ringing the bell before service begins.

Next Council Meeting: The next council meeting will be July 11, 2021 at 7pm in the pavilion. Weather permitting.

Adjournment: Motion by Ron Erb and seconded by Michael Henninger to adjourn the meeting. Motion approved unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sandra Lamenza". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Sandra Lamenza, Secretary

SEPTEMBER 2021

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
			7-8pm – Monthly Celebration Club with Miss Laurie 7pm - Weekly Congregational Family Time of Prayer for Medical Professionals, Educators, Students & Their Families			Pastor Tom's Weekly Day Off
* <u>(Both</u> In-Person <u>and</u> on Zoom)						
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost 8:45am - Adult Bible Study on Zoom 9:30am - Outdoor Worship* 9:30am - SONDay Celebration with Miss Laurie (In-Person at the Church) 10:30am - Pavilion/Drive Through Holy Communion with Pastor Tom & Miss Laurie	Pastor Tom Taking Monthly Extra Day Off Labor Day	9:30am - Pastor Tom at Conference Pastors Meeting	7pm - Weekly Congregational Family Time of Prayer for Medical Professionals, Educators, Students & Their Families	Day of Prayer for Peace with Justice, Beginning in the Middle East		Pastor Tom's Weekly Day Off
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost 8:45am - Adult Bible Study (on Zoom) 9:30am - SONDay Celebration Worship, with Blessing of the Backpacks & Devices and Sunny Sermon* 10:30am - Departure for Congregational Outing to Knoebel's 7pm - Congregational Council Meeting Grandparent's Day	6:30pm - Monthly Book Discussion Group Fellowship in Pavilion	Holy Cross Day	7pm - Weekly Congregational Family Time of Prayer for Medical Professionals, Educators, Students & Their Families Deadline to Submit Items for October "St. John's Epistle"		Pastor Tom's Weekly Day Off (instead fo 9/25)	Pastor Tom's Weekly Day Off
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost 9am - SONDay Celebration with Miss Laurie (In-Person at the Church) 9am - Confirmation Class (In-Person at the Church) 9am - Youth Group Bible Study (In-Person at the Church) 9am - Adult Bible Study (on Zoom) 10:15am - OUTDOOR WORSHIP* 11:15am - "Welcome Back" Congregational Family Picnic, Hosted by Youth Group (in the Pavilion) 3pm - Upper Dauphin Lutheran Youth Organization School Kit Project (in the Pavilion)	7pm - Upper Dauphin Conference Cabinet Meeting at St. Christopher Lutheran, Lykens	Matthew, Apostle & Evangelist 12:30pm - Pastor Tom at Lower Susquehanna Synod Compensation & Benefits Committee Meeting 6:15pm - Worship & Music Committee Meeting	7pm - Weekly Congregational Family Time of Prayer for Medical Professionals, Educators, Students & Their Families Autumn Begins			8am-4pm - St. John Hosts Lower Susquehanna Synod Womens' Organization Annual Convention in Church and Pavilion
26	27	28	29	30		
Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost 9am - SONDay Celebration with Miss Laurie (In-Person at the Church) 9am - Confirmation Class (In-Person at the Church) 9am - Youth Group Bible Study (In-Person at the Church) 9am - Adult Bible Study (on Zoom) 10:15am – Worship*		6:15pm - Property Committee Meeting	Michael and All Angels 7pm - Weekly Congregational Family Time of Prayer for Medical Professionals, Educators, Students & Their Families			

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

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Grace Weaver, Sexton	No Email	570-809-1510
Judith Ferree, Organist	jjferree@epix.net	717-362-4228
Carol Hubler, Choir Director	mchubler@gmail.com	570-758-5052
Rachel Henry, Secretary	henryfamily2004@gmail.com	717-439-3897
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Fay Nichols, Prayer Chain Coordinator	fnichols46@comcast.net	717-329-7447

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