



St. John's Newsletter

June 2020



Maintaining Christian Unity

I urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called. Live with all humility, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3 —EHV)

Christian unity is a wonderful thing. David writes in Psalm 133, **how good and how pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity!** When people from all walks of life—from different backgrounds, cultures, societies—stand side-by-side (or, nowadays, six feet apart) worshipping the Lord, it is a wonderful thing. How great is it when two co-workers, who don't see eye to eye on things at work, pray to their Savior together during a worship service! Or when the Packer and Viking fan receive the Lord's Supper together—Christian unity is a wonderful thing! This unity is a unity that the Holy Spirit created when he called us to faith through the gospel. This is a unity that exists only in the Holy Christian Church, which is the body of believers. Through the forgiveness of sins, won for us by Christ on the cross, we together have been made holy. This unity does not depend on who we are or something that we have done—we do not create it; the Holy Spirit has. And yet, by our selfish and sinful words and actions we can easily (and often do) disrupt this Spirit-made unity. With petty quarrels and inconsiderate actions, we may harm the body of believers, hinder the gospel, and do damage to the Church.

I don't need to tell you this, but I will anyway: we are living in unprecedented times (unprecedented, at least, as far as our generations are concerned). Over the last few months, you have read and heard many different things about this ongoing pandemic. By now, most of us have formed our own opinions—and they are strong opinions. For the most part, we are convinced that we are right and that anyone who disagrees with us is wrong (but let's be honest, none of us are experts and we are all trying to figure this out as we go along). As we begin returning to public worship, we are bound to disagree with one another. You might think that there was absolutely no reason for any kind of lockdown, while another member thinks it's crazy that the lockdown was ever lifted. You may think that it's selfish, ignorant, and reckless to get together with a large group of people—“how could you do such a thing and put other people at risk?” At the same time, some of your brothers and sisters in Christ, have read the same articles and studied the same data—and thus are aware of the risks—but have come to the conclusion that the rewards of public worship far outweigh the slight risk to themselves or someone else. You and those close to you might think the best thing to do is to return to normal ASAP, to pack the Church, and sing his praises at the top of your lungs. But there are just as many who think that we shouldn't return at all until it's safer and we know for sure what direction this thing is headed. You get the idea.

Here's the thing: in an instance like this, it doesn't matter who is right and who is wrong. The Lord calls on us to maintain a spirit of unity. In respect to COVID-19 and how we should return to public worship, we strive to respect the opinions and feelings of all our members. That might mean making compromises for the sake of others so that we don't put a stumbling block in front of the gospel. Can we respectfully disagree with decisions that have been made? Definitely, and we certainly welcome any feedback and dialogue. But we remember that no matter on what side you fall, we are united by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ. Christian unity is a wonderful thing—a unity that we do not want to disrupt.

Pastor Frey

June 2020

RETURNING TO PUBLIC WORSHIP: Included in this newsletter is our three-page plan on returning to public worship. We rejoice that after two months we are able to return to the Lord's house to worship together, at the same time, we want to do so in a safe manner. Please look over the document carefully. If you have any comments or concerns, please contact one of the Pastors or any of the council members.

As we go forward, we will continue live-streaming our services and posting our worship folders online. If you need any help accessing these resources, please don't hesitate to contact us.

As far as the calendar is concerned—please understand that this is a fluid situation. As we examine our current plan and receive feedback, changes may be made.

BIBLE CLASSES: For the time being, we'll still hold on-line Bible Studies—Mondays with Pastor Frey on the book of Esther and Thursdays with Pastor Gartner on the distinction between Law and Gospel. If you want to join in these Bible Studies, please contact us.

QUARTERLY VOTERS MEETING: Our regularly scheduled Voters meeting for April 28 has been rescheduled to **Tuesday, June 16th**. At this meeting you'll be able to review and discuss our current worship plan.

CONFIRMATION: Similar to our Voters' meeting the examination of our confirmands (scheduled for April 26) and their confirmation (May 3) has been indefinitely postponed. We plan to have our examination/confirmation whenever we are able to join together.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP: We want you to know that we are here to help you through any troubles you might be facing. Please do not be afraid to call any of the Pastors or the Church Office with any of your questions. We will do our best to be of assistance. We ask for your prayers and patience as we go through these uncertain times.

Please also keep an eye on each other. Stay in contact with those who are elderly or living by themselves or those who may be going through medical issues. If you happen to run into some financial hardships or know someone who may need some financial help, please don't hesitate to call one of the Pastors and we will seek to provide some sort of financial assistance.

WELS APPLE VALLEY FOOD PANTRY: The food pantry thanks everyone for the amazing donations over the past couple of months. The food pantry needs these items: cereal (we need on average between 150-175 boxes per month), cookies, crackers, boxed potatoes, canned fruits, Mac 'n' Cheese and Hamburger helpers, toilet paper and paper towel, pancake mix and syrup, cream soups, pork 'n' beans, and peanut butter. Please drop items off at church the **week of June 7**.

Thank you for supporting the food pantry.

GIFTS TO OUR LORD DURING APRIL

		<u>Expenses</u>
General Fund	\$30,226.00	\$31,497.00
General Fund YTD	\$137,677.00	\$136,063.00
Building Fund	\$1,200.00	
Land Development Fund	\$55.00	
Missions (WELS)	\$2,427.50	
Christian Family Solutions	\$160.00	
Institutional Ministry	\$340.00	
FVLHS Operational	\$445.00	
FVLHS Let the Children Come	\$925.00	

"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income."
1 Corinthians 16:2

NEW OPTION FOR GIVING YOUR OFFERING: VANCO, the company we use for online giving through our website, now offers an app that allows you to give directly to St. John through your smart phone, VANCO Give Plus. Simply download the app, login/create a username, and then find St. John. This app will allow you to give to whatever fund you so desire, as well as set a one-time offering, or a recurring offering with a specific frequency. For more information, contact Tim Springstroh or one of the pastors. Below are the links for the app.

Google Play:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.vanco.gpm>



Apple App Store:

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/give/id1120840616>

