



St. John's Newsletter

September 2020



You Are Never Alone

“Then the word of the Lord suddenly came to him, saying, “Why are you here, Elijah?” He said, “I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of Armies, but the people of Israel have abandoned your covenant. They have torn down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking to take my life. Then the Lord said, Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the Lord, for the Lord is passing by. . . After the fire there was a soft, whispering voice.” (1 Kings 19:9-12 – EHV)

It is a tough time to be a Christian, isn't it? In the last decade or so the amount of people who describe themselves as Christians dropped by more than 10%. The younger the group of people, the worse the statistics. For example, 36% of millennials are now considered 'nones', meaning they have no religious affiliation. Sadly, we see these same trends in our own churches. How many of our Confirmation students remain faithful in worship after they are confirmed? How many of our young people are heading off to college to never return to the church? And don't even get people started about the mocking that Christians receive, as we are labeled as intolerant or bigoted for following the Bible. It seems that our country is trending in the wrong direction, and the more it goes the wrong direction the harder our lives seem to get.

What about you? How are you feeling these days? Are you a committed Christian who is looking around for your brothers and sisters in Christ and wondering, “Where is everybody?” Are you struggling in your faith right now due to all of these outside pressures – like the pandemic and mask mandate, etc.? Are you just about at your breaking point or maybe even past your breaking point and feeling tempted to just throw in the “spiritual towel” as you wonder if God is really in control or cares about you?

If you are feeling this way, you aren't alone. Elijah, one of God's prophets, also once felt that same way. He was coming off one of the biggest display of God's power in human history. He had challenged hundreds of false prophets to a test to see who the true God was. Long story short: Our God won and Elijah lived, and their god lost and they died. Elijah, though, didn't have much time to celebrate because the evil Queen Jezebel vowed to murder him within the day. Elijah fled and found himself alone asking God to take his life. It was while he was spending the night in a cave, that God came to Elijah—not in the wind, or an earthquake, or in fire, but in a gentle whisper. Through his grace and calmness God reminded Elijah that he was not alone and even more than that – God was still in control of all things.

As we battle the devil and his many lies and the effects of sin in our lives and in our hearts, know this: We also are not alone! We can be sure of this because our Lord and Savior was willing to die alone on a cross, forsaken by his own Father in heaven, for us. When we are tempted to just give up or to feel that we are all alone, listen to the comfort of the beautiful, yet powerful, whisper of God's saving Gospel as we read the Bible and see his many acts of power and mercy for God's people. Like Elijah, we are being spiritually strengthened and uplifted as the Lord speaks to us through the gentle whisper of the Gospel!

Pasta Mark Gartner

Pastor Gartner

September 2020

RETURNING TO PUBLIC WORSHIP: We rejoice that we have been able to return to the Lord's house to worship together, but at the same time we want to do so in a safe manner. We will continue to practice social distancing.

Hand sanitizer is available at the doors. All items have been removed from the pews and will not be used for some time.

Take extra care when using the restrooms. Consider letting one person use the restroom at a time. Please do not leave your worship folder on the counter, rather take it with you.

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION: Changes for the Lord's Supper will continue for September 3 & 6 and September 27 & 28.

- Pastors will sanitize their hands before each table.
- The wafers will be placed in a flat hand; the pastors will be careful not to touch your hand as they distribute communion.
- The common cup will not be used for a time.
- The communion tray for individual cups will be filled with spaces between cups so that you do not touch other cups.
- Communicants will line up in front of the first pew, practicing "social distancing" unless they are from the same household.

BIBLE CLASSES Sunday morning Bible classes will resume Sunday, September 13 at 9:15 am.

Our Monday morning Bible classes will resume Monday, September 14 at 8:00 am. Tuesday evening Bible classes will resume on Tuesday, September 15 at 5:30 pm.

LABOR DAY WEEKEND WORSHIP will be Thursday, September 3 at 6:30 pm and Sunday, Sept. 6 at 7:30, 9:00 and 10:30 am. **No** Monday evening service on Sept. 7.

WORSHIP TIMES CHANGING Our fall schedule will begin Sunday, September 13, 2020. To begin with, the worship times will be at 8:00 and **10:30 am** every Sunday. Bible classes and Sunday School will be held between services. Monday evening worship will continue to be at 6:30 pm. If we cannot maintain social distancing with three worship services, we will add an additional worship service each week.

CONFIRMATION CLASSES Classes for children in grades 6-8 will begin on Wednesday, September 9, 2020 from 6:00-7:30 pm in the lower level of church.

SUNDAY SCHOOL Sunday school for your children (3K to 6th grade) will begin on Sunday, September 13, 2020 at 9:15 am. If you are willing to use your time and abilities to share Jesus with the children this year (2020-2021) either as a teacher or helper, please contact Pastor Frey as soon as possible. This year because of social distancing, we are planning on having our 7th and 8th graders join in with the adult Bible study upstairs in the sanctuary.

CHOIR With the current mask mandate in place, we are going to hold-off on choir practice until the mandate expires. Hopefully we'll start on October 1st, but more information will be given. Contact Dave Dahl at (920) 915-3867 with any questions.

WOMEN OF FAITH We'll be contacting those who have regularly attended Women of Faith in the past to see if there is enough desire to hold our meetings this fall. Please keep your eyes open for future announcements.

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY As with the Women of Faith, we'll be contacting those who have regularly attended our Men's Bible study in the past to see if there is enough desire to hold meetings this fall. Please keep your eyes open for future announcements.

WELS APPLE VALLEY FOOD PANTRY: The food pantry thanks everyone for their generous support. For September, the food pantry needs these items: Chunky soups, tomato, chicken and creamed soups, pasta sauces, spaghetti noodles and bagged egg noodles, canned fruit (currently there is no limit on fruit at Aldi's), boxed, packaged and canned potatoes, all rice and noodle side dishes, men's and women's deodorants, hand and body lotions, toilet bowl cleaners and bathroom and kitchen disinfecting sprays, paper towels and toilet paper. Thank you for supporting the food pantry. Please drop items off at church by **Friday, September 11.**

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QUARTERLY VOTERS MEETING: Our second quarterly Voters' meeting was held on Tuesday, August 11th. Meeting minutes and quarterly reports are available in the entryway.

WE ARE HERE TO HELP: We want you to know that we are here to help you through any troubles. 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.

GIFTS TO OUR LORD DURING JULY:

		<u>Expenses</u>
General Fund	\$23,957.00	\$21,995.00
General Fund YTD	\$226,324.00	\$208,165.00
Building Fund	\$925.00	
Land Development Fund	\$135.00	
Missions (WELS)	\$1,624.50	
Christian Family Solutions	\$325.00	
Institutional Ministry	\$200.00	
FVLHS Operational	\$625.00	
FVLHS Let the Children Come	\$720.00	

"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

AN 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>

