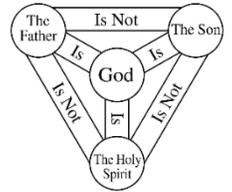




St. John's Newsletter

August 2021



Is Worship At Church Essential?

They continued to hold firmly to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread, and to the prayers. . . All the believers were together and had everything in common. . . Day after day, with one mind, they were devoted to meeting in the temple area. (Acts 2:42-46)

One of the new buzzwords is the word "essential." We have heard that word used to describe a number of different things from "essential workers" to "essential businesses." People tried to spell out for us in great detail what qualified as essential and what wasn't. I am not here today to hash out again what should be essential or not, but I am here to tell you that there is one thing that is essential. Maybe I can focus our attention better by asking you, "Is gathering at Church for public worship essential?" Again, I am not here to pull off the band aid of this past year and argue whether the actions of this past year were appropriate or not. Instead, I would rather have all of us look at where we stand here in August 2021 and try and answer the question, "Is gathering at Church for public worship essential?"

During this past year, our lives were turned upside down in lots of ways, politically, economically, socially, medically, and don't forget spiritually? To protect their health and especially those who are at high risk to the Covid virus many people have elected to watch our Livestream Worship Services. And let me say, what a blessing it was to have our Livestream system in place before the pandemic and what a blessing it has been to serve the spiritual needs of those who couldn't attend worship publicly each week during the pandemic. God's Word is being proclaimed boldly and clearly through our Livestream services and 100's of people's faith are being strengthened through these Livestream services each week.

But we are at a different place than we were 16 months ago. People have been given the opportunity to get a vaccine that for most people has broken down some of the health barriers. And yet, I have heard from a number of people, "Pastor I have gotten pretty used to watching the worship service from my Living Room in my pajamas with a cup of coffee in my hand," or "Pastor, the Livestream makes it so much easier for me because it is so hard to get all my little kids up on Sunday morning and get them to Church. It is going to be real hard to get back in the routine of coming to Church."

Scripture compels us to dig deeper than convenience and comfort and whether we feel our Church experience is enjoyable enough. Yes, those things matter, but not more than this: God himself declares his church's public gatherings to be essential. Listen as we hear what the early Church was like, **"They continued to hold firmly to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of the bread, and to the prayers. . . All the believers were together and had everything in common. . . Day after day, with one mind, they were devoted to meeting in the temple area."** Yes, we can receive God's Word through our Livestream services and for some this will continue to be the best way to worship. But for most of us, we can see a great example from those early Christians who gathered together every day and prayed together and worshipped together in the Temple and encouraged each other. We are stronger together than by ourselves, and that is one of the main reasons God wants us to be there for each other, and public Worship is one of the best ways for us to do that. The unity that we have is so beautifully expressed in public worship as we sing together and listen together and come to Lord's Supper together. In that sense, gathering at Church for public worship is very essential.

This is not meant to be a guilt article against all those who have stayed away or who might still stay away because of health reasons. Rather, I pray that you see this as an encouragement article that fills us with a burning desire to gather together and worship together and to hear God's Word together. Worship at church is our primary way to accomplish this unity and togetherness, and I pray that I will see you soon as we journey together to our home in heaven.

Pastor Mark Gartner

Pastor Gartner

August 2021

ALTAR GUILD

Lorinda Suhr	920-733-8515
Elizabeth Wilson	920-606-4603
Marilyn Wilson	920-858-2370
Bonnie Lillge	920-734-5373

DIVINE CALL FOR AN ASSOCIATE PASTOR After prayerful deliberations, Pastor Nathaniel Biebert has returned the Call to serve here at St. John. He will continue to serve our Savior at Risen Savior Lutheran Church, Austin, Texas. May the Lord bless his ministry.

Sunday, July 25 at 9:00 am between worship services, we will have a Congregational Voters' meeting to place a Divine Call to replace Pastor Frey. All Voters are encouraged to attend this meeting.

SUMMER SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY We have brought back this summer our family type Bible Study on all non-Communion Sundays. We will meet on August 8, 15, 22. The study is entitled, "The ABC's of Worship — Lutheran Customs and Practices." We started this a few summers ago and will be finishing it up this Summer. It is our prayer that through this study God will lead us to grow in our appreciation of the Gospel as it is reflected in the way we worship. This class is intended for members of all ages so everyone can join us.

There is a booklet that accompanies this study which you may purchase to guide you in your study. (A sample copy is on the back counter to look at — Please don't take this copy!) Please sign up if you would like one of these booklets. The cost is \$3.00.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL Join us for a one-day Vacation Bible School (VBS) on Monday August 2, from 9:00 am-noon. Please bring your children (3K-6th grades) and invite your friends to hear the Word of God and use this as another opportunity to learn about God's love for us that is shown to us in Jesus.

MONDAY/TUESDAY BIBLE CLASS Beginning Monday August 9th at 8:00 am and Tuesday August 10th at 5:30 pm, we will start a short 4-week Bible Study on "The History of the WELS — Past, Present and Future."

CHURCH PICNIC Our Church Picnic will be on Sunday August 15th right after church at Church. Since the shelters were not available at Plamann Park and because we really wanted to make this an event to welcome back the many people who have been unable to worship at Church over the last year because of the pandemic, we decided to have the Picnic at Church.

We hope that everyone will be able to join us for this afternoon of fun and fellowship. There will be games for the kids and lots of good food and fellowship. A sign-up sheet is out to help us plan for how many will be attending. This will be a potluck lunch. The meat and drinks will be provided. Please bring a dish or dessert to pass.

LWMS The Wolf River Circuit is planning on have a fall rally on Saturday, October 16 at Bethlehem Lutheran Church in Hortonville. St. Paul, Stephenville is cohosting. Watch for more information as we get closer to the date. If you have any questions about LWMS, please contact Kathy Schabo at 920-427-2990.

MISSION FESTIVAL Mark your calendars for Sunday September 19th. Pastor Dave Bostedt from the Apache Mission will be our guest preacher and he will also give a presentation about the mission work being done on the Apache reservation during the Bible Study hour.

WELS APPLE VALLEY FOOD PANTRY For August, the food pantry needs canned fruit cocktail/mixed fruit, applesauce, canned pasta, boxed potato side dishes, cream of chicken soup, canned corn (really needed), bar soap and hair conditioner (we have plenty of shampoos at this time). We continue to be blessed with donations; thank you for your support. Please drop items off at church by **Friday, August 6, 2021**.

GIFTS TO OUR LORD DURING JUNE		Expenses
General Fund	\$24,315.00	\$21,674.00
General Fund Year to Date	\$204,621.00	\$201,826.00
Building Fund	\$1,425.00	
Land Development Fund	\$280.00	
Missions (WELS)	\$2,327.50	
Christian Family Solutions	\$770.00	
Institutional Ministries	\$680.00	
FVLHS Operational	\$1,135.00	
FVLHS Debt Retirement	\$1,265.00	

"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

LABOR DAY WEEKEND WORSHIP Labor Day weekend worship will be Thursday, September 2 at 6:30 pm and Sunday, September 5 at 8:00 and 10:00 am. **No** Monday evening service will be held on September 6.

COMING IN SEPTEMBER Beginning Sunday, September 12, worship service times will be at 8:00 and **10:30 am**. Sunday School, Bible classes and Confirmation Instruction classes for grades 6-8 will resume after Labor Day.