



### Christ: the Firstfruits from the Dead

**But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.**

(1 Corinthians 15:20 — EHV)

I, along with most people I assume, enjoy seeing tulips and other such plants first pop up out of the ground in the spring. Those first early plants indicate that the days are getting longer and warmer. Soon every plant will come up, the trees and bushes will grow leaves, and before you know it—we'll be mowing our yards and planting our gardens. It's a sign of better times to come when we can replace our boots and winter coats with shorts and t-shirts! Speaking of gardens, it's fun to watch gardens grow—from planting the seeds, to seeing the first plants sprout out of the ground, and then picking the first fruits—it can be a rewarding experience. Like the first tulip that comes out of the ground, the first fruit you pick out of your garden is a guarantee that more are to follow.

That's the picture that Paul is using in our verse above, when he calls Jesus, **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep**. The problem, of course, is that we are all sinners. And as sinners, we will all die—that is the wages of sin. Throughout history mankind has done all they could to try and avoid death, or at least extend life as long as possible. But it doesn't matter, no matter how many medical advancements are made, we will still all die. It is only natural to want to avoid death; but so many people are afraid of dying because they have no clue about what happens after death and they act as if death is the worst thing that can happen to someone.

But death is a good thing for a Christian—just as it was for Jesus. In John 12, Jesus compares his life to a kernel of wheat. It “dies” is placed in the ground, germinates, and ends up producing many more pieces of grain. In the same way, Jesus brings about the life of many through his death and resurrection. Again—he is the firstfruits from the dead! Technically Jesus wasn't the first one to be raised from the dead—there were some in the Old Testament who were raised by Elijah and Elisha; and Jesus himself raised three people from the dead. But Jesus is the first one who rose from the dead and stayed alive! Everyone else died again.

Jesus' resurrection from the dead is a guarantee that there are more to come. It is a guarantee that you will rise from the dead one day. Christ is the first to be raised from the dead, but he is not the last—there are certainly more to follow. Paul would go on to write in verse 23, **Each in his own order: Christ as the firstfruits and then Christ's people, at his coming**. On the Last Day, all our bodies will be raised from the dead, the Lord will give them life, and body and soul will be joined together for eternity! Christians don't have to be afraid of death; it's not the worst thing that can happen to us—but the best! For our death, because of the guarantee provided by Christ's resurrection, means eternal life for us with Jesus! He is the first—and we will certainly follow. As we celebrate Easter this month, let us long for the perfect life given to us by Christ as we dwell with him in eternal glory, a glory that is ours by his resurrection from the dead!

Pastor Frey

## April 2021

### ALTAR GUILD

Marsha Liewergen	920-202-2804
Melissa Price	920-735-9223
Katie Voight	920-572-6337

### HOLY WEEK WORSHIP

March 28	Palm Sunday <b>Hands of Praise—Disciples and Crowds</b>	8:00 and 10:30 am Mon. 6:30 pm
April 1	Maundy Thursday w/Lord's Supper <b>Hands of Humility—Jesus</b>	10:30 am and 6:30 pm
April 2	Good Friday w/Lord's Supper <b>Nail-Pierced Hands—Jesus</b>	1:30 pm and 6:30 pm
April 4	Easter Sunday <b>Jesus' Resurrection Gives us Peace</b>  Easter Breakfast	<b>6:30, 9:00, and 10:45 am</b>  7:30-8:45 am

**EASTER INVITE** Once again we are sending out postcards to those who are living in our area, inviting them to worship with us this Easter. We are also going to be posting messages on Facebook with the same invitation. We have extra postcards available. Prayerfully consider your "FRAN network" (Friends, Relatives, Associates, and Neighbors)—who do you know who needs to hear about the peace that Jesus' resurrection gives us? Invite them to join us on Easter Sunday by giving them a postcard. Or, at the very least, send them the Facebook invitation!

**BIBLE CLASSES** Pastor Frey started a new Bible Study on Sunday, March 7<sup>th</sup> at 9:15 am on the New Testament book of Colossians. Join us as we look at this important letter which highlights the person of Christ and his work of salvation.

Pastor Gartner has begun a new Bible Study on Mondays and Tuesdays starting Monday March 8<sup>th</sup> at 8:00 am and Tuesday night March 9<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 pm. The title of this Bible Class is, "**Luther's Small Catechism – A Study of The Apostles' Creed, Baptism and Holy Communion.**" Martin Luther wrote the Small Catechism to help assist Christians in their learning the basic truths of God's Word. Please join us in this Bible Class as we seek to strengthen our faith as we use Luther's Small

Catechism to refresh our knowledge about The Apostles' Creed, Baptism and Holy Communion.

If you would like to receive a recording of these Bible Classes, please contact one of the Pastors and we will send you the link for these recordings.

**EXAMINATION AND CONFIRMATION** Examination of 11 children of God will be held on Sunday, April 25 at 9:15 am between services. Confirmation will be on Sunday, May 2 at 10:30 am.

**QUARTERLY VOTERS' MEETING** The quarterly congregational meeting will be held Tuesday, April 20 at 7:00 pm. All voting members are encouraged to attend.

**CHURCH SEATING AND SOCIAL DISTANCING** With things moving slowly in the right direction with Covid-19, more people have been returning to worship each Sunday. Because of the pews being roped off for social distancing, this has caused some issues with finding enough seating for everyone. After considering all these things, the Church Council decided to remove the ropes from the pews on Sunday, March 28. While we may be taking down the ropes, this doesn't mean that common sense is to be thrown aside. We are asking everyone to use their Christian love and judgment as they consider not only their own levels of comfort with social distancing, but also their fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Please be respectful of each other as you worship, especially as you look to respect each other's comfort levels with social distancing. Remember that our 10:30 am and especially our Monday Evening services aren't full and one can safely socially distance if so desired. If you have questions, please talk to one of the Pastors or to a Church Council member.

**WORSHIP SERVICE THROUGH YOUR PHONE** If you have no Internet and would like to listen each week to our Worship Services, you can dial 920-212-3625 and you will be able to listen to our Sunday Worship Service. Each week the service will become available to listen to each Sunday after 10:30am and you can listen to these services at any time during the week. If you have any questions, please call Church.

## April 2021

**WORSHIP LINK** Do you find yourself waiting on Sundays for the video of our worship service to upload after it is live-streamed? It does take a long time—sometimes half a day for our video to upload in HD, after which you'll be able to find it on our Youtube page. You can always find the link on our Facebook page, which is public. Otherwise, we can email you the link to the service Sunday morning and you'll be able to watch the video before it is able to be found on our Youtube page. If this interests you, contact us and we can put you on the email list.

**MLC FUND** A few years ago St. John set up a fund to support our members who are attending Martin Luther College (MLC). This coming school year, we will have one of our members attending MLC to study to be a teacher in our WELS Schools. If you want to contribute to this fund, please mark your special offering to the "MLC Fund" by May 1st.

**FLOWER CHART** A 2021 flower chart has been placed on the bulletin board. If you would like to bring flowers for a special occasion, please sign up for that date.

**GREETING CARDS** Did you know there are individual greeting cards for purchase in the church narthex? They are being sold by our Women of Faith as a service to you.

The cards are self-serve on a spinner rack near the library and are only 50 cents per card. Check the rack often as cards are added for special holidays and occasions.

**WELS APPLE VALLEY FOOD PANTRY** For April, the food pantry needs: dish soap, hand soap, pork n beans, canned pears, applesauce, canned pasta, instant rice, 1-pound bags of rice, boxed mashed potatoes, peanut butter, cookies, tomato soup and chunky soups. At this time, we have a good supply of pasta noodles, which is a blessing! Thank you for supporting the food pantry. Please drop items off at church by **Friday, April 9, 2021**.

**WOMEN OF FAITH** All ladies of the congregation are invited to join us Tuesday, April 13 at 1:00 pm for Bible study and LWMS updates.

**MEN'S BIBLE STUDY** All men of the congregation are invited to join us on Tuesday, April 20 at 9:00 am for Bible study.

### **GIFTS TO OUR LORD DURING FEBRUARY:**

		<u>Expenses</u>
General Fund	\$26,638.00	\$29,903.00
General Fund YTD	\$70,384.00	\$97,218.00
Building Fund	\$2,085.00	
Land Development Fund	\$840.00	
Missions (WELS)	\$1,742.50	
Christian Family Solutions	\$547.00	
Institutional Ministry	\$475.00	
FVLHS Operational	\$1,380.00	
FVLHS Let the Children Come	\$1,525.00	

***"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:



Apple App Store:

