

The Epistle

MAY 2020

**St. John's Lutheran
Red Bud, Illinois**

**Church: 508 Bloom Street
618/282-2394**

**School: 808 South Main Street
618/282-3873
618-282-4087 (fax)**

**office@stjohnsredbud.org
www.stjohnsredbud.org**

**Worship: Saturdays at 5 p.m.
Sundays at 8 and 10:30 a.m.
Christian Education Hour:
Sundays from 9:30-10:15 a.m.**

We preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ,
administer the sacraments and provide
Christian education in service to all people.

Rev. Mark A. Nebel, Senior Pastor

Rev. Russell E. Koen, Pastor

Mrs. Lindsey Hudak, Director of Parish Music

Mrs. Deitt Schneider, Principal

From Lutheran Church Charities "Through the Wilderness"

*"By what route shall we attack" he asked. "Through the
Desert of Edom," he answered. (2 Kings 3:8)*

The Israelites discovered that for them, the way into the Promised Land was through the wilderness. One Bible teacher refers to it as 'God's killing field'. He says: *'In the wilderness experiences of life, the things that cause you to stumble in your walk with God are permitted to die. There He weeds out those who want only a superficial relationship from those who long to know Him intimately. It's where you learn to stand in faith and to cast all your cares on Him, because there's nowhere else to turn. It's where God says, "I finally have you where I want you." Sometimes He will lead you into the wilderness abruptly. This is especially so when He's been trying to get your attention and talk to you about a calling He's placed on your life, and until now you haven't had time to listen. Suddenly you realize that God is the only One who can get you through the situation you're in. He permits you to be stripped of pride so you can be clothed with humility; stripped of self-sufficiency so you can be brought to the place of total dependence on Him.'*

If you're going through a wilderness experience, don't think God is punishing you or that He has forsaken you. He's just allowing some things to die so that other things can be born in you and grow into fruitfulness. Be encouraged; you will come through this! By God's grace you'll get to your destination. The truth is, the only way to reach the destination God has planned for you is through the wilderness.

Prayer- Heavenly Father, in the wilderness of my life, kill off those things that keep me from being what You want me to be, and let those things that You know are best for me. I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

**ALL PUBLIC ACTIVITIES ARE CANCELED!
SCHOOL IS CLOSED! DAYCARE REOPENS ON
MAY 4 UNDER EMERGENCY CONDITIONS**

**WORSHIP SERVICES ARE ON FACEBOOK AND
YOUTUBE**

Go to our website www.stjohnsredbud.org. and click the media tab. The official video repository is <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4sudsJQ2ewoyDmWh5eigPA> page. Hit the subscribe button and click on the notification bell next to it, so that you can get notifications of when videos are made available.

Bible Studies

Check our website under the Media tab for Bible studies that you can do on your own. The topics so far are Amen, Angels, Antichrist, Apostles, Apostolic Preaching of the Resurrection, Baptism Q & A, Church and Homosexuality, Communications Skills, Cremation, Christian Citizenship, Discussing Homosexuality, End of the World, God's Will in the Lives of His People, Haggai, Having the Right Attitude, Heaven, The Justice of God, Justification and Sanctification, Islam, Live By the Spirit, Malachi, Meditation, Philemon, Purses, Was Jesus a Vegetarian?, Word Dwellers, and more to come!

Christ Is Risen! He Is Risen Indeed!



A view of our school parking lot for our Easter Sunrise drive-in worship service on Sunday, April 12.

Your Pastors' Ponderings

Disconnected Connectivity

What is the plural of "sheep"? Is it "sheeps"? No. What is the singular of "sheep"? Is it "shoop"? No. The word sheep is the plural and there is no singular. Why might that be? Let me suggest that it is because sheep are communal animals. Where you see one, you see many. They are not loners or hermits. They gather in flocks.

The Fourth Sunday of Easter in the Christian Church year calendar is called "Good Shepherd Sunday." The readings highlight the familiar biblical image of Jesus as our Good Shepherd and we are the sheep of His flock. He cares for us, provides for us, and protects us like a shepherd does for his flock of sheep. The first Sunday in May this year is Good Shepherd Sunday.

Why this talk of sheep? When the end of this year comes and the media picks a word or phrase to describe 2020, I think it will be "social distancing." It was already taking place gradually through digital and online communication, but it really has accelerated on account of this corona virus pandemic.

I saw someone walking yesterday. She was by herself but had her cell phone up to her ear. This is the perfect picture of modern social relationships. We want to be in immediate contact with someone, but we don't want it to be personal. We want to protect our private space. Thus the title for this article, "Disconnected Connectivity."

It could indeed happen that we will get so tired of social distancing that we will "flock" to gather with one another in every way possible when we are allowed to do so and feel comfortable doing so. That is the glass half-full way of looking at this current situation.

Unfortunately, I tend to have a more jaded, glass half-empty, view of this world around us. I am afraid that we will get too used to social distancing and through the habit of it or in fear of illness we will continue to separate ourselves from each other going into the future.

While life as we know it will change permanently in many ways from now on, I am concerned particularly about how this will influence our worship habits and affect our worship attendance. Watching a livestream or recorded worship service online is certainly better than having no connection to the Word of God at all. I am very thankful for the ability and assistance we have had during these weeks to provide worship from St. John's to you.

However, sheep are meant to be in a flock, and the lambs of our Good Shepherd Jesus dare not remain isolated and distant from one another for very long. For when that is so, it is much easier for the wolves of this world to pick us off and devour us one by one. We need to

be together in worship, side-by-side hearing God's Word in a group, joining our voices in one as we respond to Him in praise, and receiving the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ in the fellowship of His altar for the forgiveness of our sins and the strengthening of our faith.

I pray that sooner rather than later we will have that opportunity to gather as one flock once again. When that happens, I also pray that the sheep will hear the voice of their Good Shepherd Jesus calling them to gather, safely to be sure, but also faithfully, regularly and joyfully.

Your servant in Christ, Pastor Mark Nebel

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We have been going through difficult times these past few weeks. The stores are unable to keep up with our demands for the essentials we have taken for granted. It seems the greatest gift you can give someone for their birthday party is toilet paper: that is, if you can find it! Graduates will receive their diplomas in the mail without the class ceremony that most of us have experienced in our lives. Some of us are beginning to look like hippies with the unavailability of barbers and salons being open. If this goes much longer, I might be able to grow a ponytail! The day that happens I will retire. Oh, by the way, I am retiring July 31st. I will be writing about that a little more in the June Newsletter. Sometimes a little change in life can be difficult.

Change is not a stranger to our lives, nor is it our enemy. We have had to deal with changes almost daily. What we fear most is the loss of freedom that change can bring. The coronavirus has taken away our ability to gather in groups of more than ten people. We must stand six feet apart. We are told by our governor that a face mask is required until further notice.

Change has affected our worship life, our Christian fellowship and the gifts we want to offer God. We have tried to solve some of those problems by offering worship over our church web page and Facebook at 9:00 a.m. on Sunday mornings. The limitations placed on us have made it difficult to determine when to have confirmation and graduations. But these will be resolved in time.

One thing we can be assured of is the presence, leadership, and the compassion of our God who loves us and forgives us in Christ Jesus. We can count on God's promises of His peace when our fears distract us from a daily walk with God through His Word. He is willing to give us His help every time we open the Bible. All we need to do is open the Bible and listen to what He has to say. **"Don't be afraid, I am always with you."**

Your brother in Christ, Rev. Russell Koen

What Is A Steward? *From LCMS Stewardship*

Our Savior calls us to follow Him in generosity. “For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.” (John 13:15) We cannot give our lives for the salvation of the world, of course. Praise God – that job’s already done!

But with hearts full of thanksgiving for what Jesus has given us, we can follow Jesus’ example of generous giving. And this is not merely an example alone. It’s also our Lord’s command. “The one who contributes, (let him give) in generosity.” (Romans 12:8)

So, when we give to help others who are in need, and when we bring offerings to the Lord, we should strive to heed His command and follow the pattern He has established for us. Jesus did not give us leftovers. He gave His best. So, we should not give leftovers, either, but the first and best of what He has given us. Jesus did not give as an afterthought, but according to the plan of salvation God established from the foundation of the world.

So, when it comes to our offerings to the Lord, we should make a thoughtful plan to give generously, in proportion to the way He has blessed us. Like the Macedonian Christians, who gave according to their ability – and even beyond their ability (2 Corinthians 8:3) – we can and should give a generous portion of the income that God provides us to honor the Lord.

So also, we should give freely, just as Jesus gave freely for us. There is no compulsion involved in our works of love and our offerings to the Lord. Nor do we give grudgingly. We should give freely and cheerfully because we want to out of thanksgiving. “Each as he purposes in his heart,” as the Lord says. (2 Corinthians 9:7) There is no New Testament ceremonial law involved here. Rather, we are free to give as generously as our Savior has given for us.

In the same way, our Lord teaches us to give generously out of love – love for Him and for our neighbor. Genuine love is always love in deed (1 John 3:18), love such as Jesus showed us all. It is love that sees our neighbor in need and gives generously to help him. It is love that hears the Word of the Lord and does what it says. If we truly love, we give generously. If we give without love, our giving is not truly following Jesus.

Finally, we follow Jesus in generosity when we give for a good purpose to thank the Lord and support His gospel ministry and other works of mercy. The people of Israel gave generously for the service of God’s gospel purposes, to construct and support the operation of the tabernacle. For that was the place where the Lord received

the Old Testament sacrifices, through which He bestowed the forgiveness of sins on His people. So, they gave abundantly – so abundantly that they had to be told to stop giving. (Exodus 36:5-6)

In the same way, we should bring generous offerings to support the Lord’s work of bestowing His gifts of forgiveness, life, and salvation in our congregations through the preaching and teaching of His Word, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. We should support the Lord’s work of caring for those who are poor and needy.

From the Principal’s Pen

Grace, mercy and peace to you! Our unprecedented times continue! Never in our thoughts and minds did we predict the events which are taking place today in our world. Yes, movies have been made about such times as these but those were movies and not REAL life. Well, now our real world has become what we only saw in the movies.

School is out for the remainder of the academic school year of 2019-2020. All events have been cancelled through May 30. The postponed PTL Dinner Auction has been postponed again, hoping to have it in the fall with no date set at this time. We are trying to schedule Confirmation and Graduation for June but we do not know if we will be allowed to congregate together. With so many uncertainties, we just don’t know how things will look in a month.

Another disappointment is having to postpone the 8th grade Washington DC trip. We hope that July will be an option but many things will have to change in order for this to happen. So, we keep waiting to see how the country opens up and what our options will be.

For the present and what we do know:

Teachers will be handing out classroom materials on May 1 from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Your child’s teacher will let you know if you will have materials to pick up.

Grade Point Average will only be calculated on the first three quarters of the 2019-2020 school year.

We were able to apply and receive a \$5000 grant to help with expenses offered by Lutheran Foundation of St. Louis.

With money from the PTL dinner auction from last year we are going to continue with replacing our tiles in the K-5 hallway and 1970 addition classrooms. We want to complete this job now so classrooms can be waxed and prepared for next year.

Most importantly, God is always with us and will not forsake us! God’s continued blessings to you,

Mrs. Deitt Schneider

Unity Lutheran School Update

The annual "Share in the Miracle" Dinners this year are cancelled. Yet Unity still needs our generous donations. Their teachers continue to have daily contact with their students and families. Lessons continue.

The mission of Unity is to teach children and their families in East St. Louis about the saving grace of Jesus Christ. That mission is just as important now as it ever was! Even our supporters who are not able to attend the dinners have been very generous. We need your help to get through this current situation and prepare for the fall.

We will miss seeing you at the dinners. We value the relationships we have with you and the opportunity to share what God is doing at Unity. When this time is over, we hope to reach out and meet personally with as many of you as possible. Until then, may God bless you, your family, your church family and Unity School.

Event Reminders On Your Cell Phones

Remind Me.com is a free system that will allow us to send text messages to you reminding you of what is happening in our family of faith here at St. John's. However, it does not allow for group discussions so that there will not be continued unwanted messages from anyone in the group receiving the text. To join this remind system for St. John's, text the message @8243ad2 (new code) to the number 81010. Please contact our office at 282-2394 with your questions.

Set Up Direct Payments Thru ACH

Routine payments to St. John's can be made by direct electronic withdrawal for offerings, school lunches, preschool tuition, and daycare securely from the bank account you designate at either bi-weekly or monthly intervals. Fill out a form in the school office and select each payment account you want automatically withdrawn. It is free. You can make changes or cancel any time. If there are insufficient funds in the account at the time of payment, no funds will be withdrawn. You will be notified. We hope this option offers convenience to users and greater efficiency for our funding. If you feel more comfortable making payments by cash/check, please do!

The Prayer Chain

Our Prayer Chain Coordinator is Vickie Heller. We thank her for this service. If you would like to be part of the Prayer Chain or if you have a prayer request, please call Vickie at 618/521-7417. Please call the church office if you would like to add someone to our worship prayers. *Pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective* (James 5:16).

ELDER ZONES FOR 2020:

(Chairman, Stuart Langrehr)

Zone 1: D. Adams thru R. Collins-
Elder Eric Fritsche (618/410-5989)

Zone 2: S. Conboy thru D/K Grohmann-
Elder Stuart Langrehr (282-2736)

Zone 3: N/E Grohmann thru R/K Herriman-
Elder Jacob Arbeiter (618/615-1108)

Zone 4: R. Herriman thru T/E Krick-
Elder Adam Guebert (618/920-2403)

Zone 5: Wil/Martha Krick thru Janel Maes-
Elder David Reinhardt (618/967-7967)

Zone 6: Pat Malik thru Lanie Pensoneau-
Elder Quentin Stenzel (282-4661)

Zone 7: A/A Piel thru Don Schrader-
Elder Garon Schnepel (813/240-8978)

Zone 8: J/D Schrader thru B/C Turner-
Elder Stanley Langrehr (282-3481)

Zone 9: D/K Uffelmann thru Doug Zschiegner-
Elder Kirk Liefer (618/559-7950)

May-June Servers

Flowers: Kathy Grohmann and Stephanie Liefer
Paraments: Carol Turner

Sunday School Lessons

There is no Sunday School while elementary schools are out of session. To use the weekly materials at home, parents can go to www.cph.org/enduringfaith. The login is office@stjohnsredbud.org and the password is welcome. We are in Unit 3. May will be the last month that these lessons are available.

Keep Freedom Alive

Without moral people, this government can't exist.
So with prayer and petition, God's grace we enlist.
In humbling ourselves, He will raise our nation,
And grant us His blessings beyond expectation.

America is the "beacon of hope" for victims of tyranny.
She has rescued the oppressed for the sake of liberty.
Freedom comes with a heavy price, sadly costing many lives.
So we must all join together in this zealous endeavor:
Keep freedom alive! *Joan Voges, 2008*

Jesus and Me

When I look up at Jesus He looks down at me.
I know that I see Jesus, but what does Jesus see?

Jesus finds me from His cross. He sees what I should be.
All I dare to ask of Him, is that He blesses that to me.
Vic Both 2020

