
First St. John Journal

Volume 33, Issue 5

May, 2020

When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear ... , Jesus came and stood among them and said, 'Peace be with you.'" (John 20:19)

This scene has particular resonance for us in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic. We have celebrated Easter. We have proclaimed, "Christ is risen!" Yet many of us are still spending our days behind our own doors, whether for fear of the virus or out of concern to limit community transmission of COVID-19 among others.

We have celebrated Easter, but our worship and family gatherings were largely virtual rather than in person. Our celebrations weren't as festive this year. And while the liturgical season of Lent is over, our daily lives still have a Lenten feel to them, a prolonged waiting for more joyous days to come.

What I find most striking about this scene in John's Gospel is that it takes place after Mary Magdalene has told the disciples she has seen the risen Lord. She is an eyewitness to the resurrection promise: the crucified one is alive again! And the disciples' response to this earth-shattering news was to stay inside behind locked doors, afraid.

And yet . . . Jesus breaks in through those locked doors. Jesus breaks in through their fears. Jesus breaks in, with a blessing of peace.

The same is true for us today. Jesus breaks in through our closed doors. Jesus breaks in through our fears. Jesus breaks in, with a blessing of peace. This is the Good News the world so desperately needs to hear.

Right now, there are good reasons to limit our movement, but the Word of God cannot be contained by human limits—not even the limits of death and the grave.

In a world craving a return to "normal," we have something even better than "normal" to offer: the promise of resurrection and new life!

Whether or not we feel it on any given day, Christ is risen! Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

— Pastor Ray!

Editor's note: Please see the following page for a letter from Pastor regarding the operation of our church during this pandemic.



OFFERING CONTRIBUTIONS

Church services are indeed cancelled, but we still have to meet church operating expenses. Currently, contributions are down from what we'd normally see this time of year.

To give online, go to www.firststjohn.com and click on "Stewardship & Giving" to sign up for the Vanco program. (If you need help, contact Lisa Anderson at 419-392-3712). You may also consider mailing your offering: 2471 Seaman St. Toledo, OH. 43605. Someone is picking up our mail at the downtown post office. Thank you for your patience.

REGARDING THE A.W.E. SERVICE

We have decided to suspend the A.W.E. service until further notice due to the COVID-19 pandemic. We will keep you updated on possible future services.

REGARDING THIS NEWSLETTER

As our events are still cancelled, the calendar will not be included. The regular April council meeting and a special meeting in early April were held via Zoom, so council minutes will be included for our members. Please stay safe, everyone. We miss you.



LETTER FROM PASTOR—COVID-19 RESPONSE

I would be rich if I had a dollar for every time I have either heard someone say or said myself, “These are unprecedented times.” Truth is, these are unprecedented times; along with being extremely challenging. Individuals, families, communities, agencies, institutions, you name it are all facing new things without any previous experience to draw from to help decide what to do in the moment—let alone in the future. The church is no different.

The requirement for physical distancing (I don’t like the term “social” distancing. I believe we can still be “social,” even at a distance); the use of masks, and the need for extreme sanitizing of hands and surfaces has meant we have had no face-to-face, group worship services or activities since March 8. During this time, we have and will continue to act in line with the requirements of the State of Ohio and the directives of our Northwestern Ohio Synod Bishop, Daniel Beaudoin.

Each Tuesday at 4:00 pm Bishop Beaudoin holds a ZOOM meeting with all pastors and leaders of the NWO Synod to give encouragement, pastoral care and updated information. Likewise, each week the Bishop attends a conference call with Governor DeWine’s office and the state’s other religious leaders to discuss conditions and directives based on the current situation with the pandemic. During the week, I also try to listen to most of the Governor’s daily press conferences to stay up-to-date.

It was good to hear that in the coming days some of the restrictions will be lifted to allow some folks to go back to work and have more person-to-person interaction, but only with continued protections still in place: the use of face masks, physical distancing, sanitizing hands and surfaces, and no group gatherings of more than 10 persons. Under these conditions, Bishop Beaudoin has determined we should not have group worship experiences throughout the month of May. This has necessitated the postponement of Confirmation Sunday (I will be communicating with the families shortly), Mother’s Day, and a wedding that was scheduled for May 30.

I know this is not what you may want to hear, it is not what I want to hear, but I believe this is still the most responsible and loving course of action. At the same time, we are looking to move forward. The Synod has formed a taskforce to purpose ideas and methods to transition toward reopening the church to worship and activities.

In the coming weeks, the leaders of the congregation will be meeting to review the material and begin getting ready, because the time will come when we will be able to come together again to worship, learn, and enjoy fellowship. I do not believe the current situation is our “new normal.” Until then, we will continue to find new ways to do worship, learning, meeting, and being church. (I guess there is a blessing to our technology revolution.) We have already had remote meetings via ZOOM.

These can be scary times. But remember, none of this changes God’s love for each of us and for the world. Jesus Christ has risen! We live on the other side of the empty tomb in a world where Jesus has promised to be with us always. Jesus has protected his church through difficult times in the past and he will do so again. We can and must depend upon Jesus. Please know I am praying for each of you, and I feel your prayer support for me each day. Let’s continue to do all we can to stay in touch with each other and provide community. We will get through this together.

I would be happy to speak with anyone regarding the issues we are facing at this time. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 567-395-0143 or pastor1@firststjohn.com

Let us pray: “Eternal God, amid all the turmoil and changes of the world, your love is steadfast and your strength never fails. In this time of danger and trouble, be to us a sure guardian and rock of defense. Guide the leaders of our nation with your wisdom, comfort those in distress, and grant us courage and hope to face the future; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.”

SUNDAY SERVICES ONLINE

Pastor Rayl records our Sunday services and places links to them on our website: www.firststjohn.com Once there, look on the right side of the home page in the box labeled “Recent Posts.” Links to the most current services will be there.

A link to some of Dr. Pattin’s music also can be found on our homepage in green lettering about half way down. In addition, the Sunday worship bulletin and announcements are also there to download and print, if you wish.

MEMBER UPDATES

Births

None.

Baptisms

None.

Marriages

None.

Deaths

4-19-20 Chuck Neal
 Margie Myers
4-22-20 Dorothy Zeadker

Transfers to/from First St. John

None.



DONATIONS NEEDED FOR GENACROSS RESIDENTS

The Genacross staff is trying to keep the residents busy and engaged even though they are sequestered in their rooms, which means they need more materials the longer this goes on. If you can, would you volunteer to order some items online and have them shipped to Genacross? This is a simple act we can do to help in this time of pandemic. Thank you in advance for your generosity! Some ideas for items to donate include:

- adult coloring books
- sketch pads
- markers, colored pencils
- puzzle books of all kinds
- crafts they can make on their own (craft kits)
- decks of cards
- books
- jigsaw puzzles
- stationery, notecards, and pens

Even after the restrictions are lifted, these would be wonderful new activities for the residents to enjoy. If you decide to donate items, please have them shipped to:

Genacross Lutheran Services
Assisted Living
131 N. Wheeling St.
Toledo, Ohio 43605

CHURCH DIRECTORY



After much delay, First St. John's church directory is finally here. Now we have a new problem—how to get it into your hands. Mailing would be very expensive, so we'd like to arrange scheduled pick up times at some date in the near future, perhaps a "drive-thru" event. For those with health issues or scheduling problems, we may arrange for a delivery.

When we have scheduled a pick up date, we will send out an email to local members and place it on the church's Facebook page. We will also call others who may not have internet access. Thank you for your patience.

CONFIRMATION NEWS

Confirmation is postponed until a future Sunday, whenever the governor's restrictions on gatherings are eased or lifted. Our eighth grade confirmands this year are: Vince Barton, Carter Baxter, April Church, Ethan Clair, Brandon Clair, Vince Gallaher, Emma Kalmbach, Barry Layman II, Katelyn Le Grand, Emily Lipper, Jamie Lipper, Courtney Miller, Noah Schacht, Jersey Schumaker, Dominic Vartorella, and Alyson Walendzak.

Please pray for these young people and their families as this unusual school year comes to a close.

CEMETERY CLEAN UP THANK YOU

The Cemetery Committee extends its thanks to Jay Emch who, all on his own, cleaned the church cemetery during the first week of April. We greatly appreciate all his hard work!

MEMORIAL DAY CELEBRATION CANCELLED



After much discussion, we have decided NOT to have an official service this year. Christ Dunberger Post is unclear about their activities as well due to the uncertainty stemming from the pandemic. Before Memorial Day, we intend to put the flags out on the graves of the veterans buried in our cemetery so the flags will be there for anyone planning to visit the cemetery on their own.



DAY SCHOOL NEWS

We will remain closed through the end of our normal school year. We hope to open our summer program as soon as we can in June. (Our summer program is supposed to begin June 1st.) Our fall program begins August 19th.

Registration: We are still accepting registrations for both our summer and fall programs. First St. John members may enroll their children with no registration fee. For non-members, we have extended our “early bird” registration discount through June 1st—registration fees are reduced from \$150 to \$100 during this time.

Our classes are for three and four-year-old children. We also have a five-day, full-day program for five-year-old children who will miss the age cutoff for the public schools’ kindergarten. Extended care is available. Call Andrea Buckley at 419-691-6480 for more information (voicemail is checked).

Our Website: If you haven’t visited our website, check it out at www.firststjohndayschool.org. We have several educational resources you can use for your children and grandchildren while we are all staying home.

*** GALA News ***

The school’s Gala fundraiser, originally scheduled for November 13th of this year, has now been postponed until the spring of 2021. There is a lot of planning involved and a lot of time needed to secure prize donations, and as the closures were extended, we realized we wouldn’t have enough time to plan the quality event we would like to have.

ATTENTION, ALL FSJ GROUPS

As we approach the summer season and the uncertainty of First St. John’s schedule continues, please stay in contact with the leaders of your individual groups to determine when you will meet again. Remember, with God’s help we will get through this.

MEN’S BREAKFAST FELLOWSHIP NOTICE

We have cancelled our May breakfast due to the pandemic. Please stay tuned to the bulletins and the June/July newsletter for our next meeting date and time. Thank you, and stay safe!



NOTE ON MEMORIALS

Since our church mail has been delayed due to the pandemic, we think many of the memorials that were mailed in have not reached us yet. We will run our memorials column in the next newsletter.

We’ve had several questions about sending in memorials during this time. After discussion with Esther Bell (she records the memorials) and with her permission, please note the following. If you plan to send a sympathy card with your memorial, please mail those directly to the family. They will drop off any memorial donations to Esther. If you’re sending only the memorial donation, you can either mail it directly to Esther or drop it off at her home. If you decide to hand-deliver it, please call her before coming over. (You can call the church office for Esther’s contact information.)

Also, the online giving VANCO form on our church website (www.firststjohn.com) now has a place to indicate your gift is a memorial. Click on the "Stewardship & Giving" tab at the top of the home page to access the form. We’ll have a record of your giving the memorial; however, you’ll need to contact Esther to let her know you donated online and who it was in memory of.

If you’ve already mailed a memorial and the check has not yet cleared, be assured we will deposit it when we receive it. Thank you.

RUTH CIRCLE NEWS

Due to the COVID-19 epidemic, the Ruth Circle has suspended its meetings until further notice. When things return to “normal,” watch future bulletins and newsletters for any meeting dates and times. Thank you, and we hope to reconnect soon.



We are waiting to hear when our WELCA activities will be allowed to resume. Circle members, please check in with each other regarding any future gatherings.

We would like to thank Louise Sommers from the Ruth Circle for sending out Easter cards this year, not just to our homebound members, but also to several other members who may have needed a note of encouragement during these strange times. We hope everyone who received a card enjoyed reading her kind words. Thank you! — Sue Ann Rogers



HELP WANTED: MINISTER OF YOUTH AND FAMILY

First St. John Lutheran and Martin Luther Lutheran churches are looking for a faithful, talented disciple of Jesus Christ to fill a new position as Minister of Youth and Family at First St. John and who will also act as spiritual leader at Martin Luther. This is a shared staffing position between both congregations.

This person will demonstrate a life of faith in Jesus Christ and of active discipleship. The candidate should be an energetic self-starter with a passion for young people, with a goal of working for the youths' well-being and faith development in discovering their path of discipleship. The Minister of Youth and Family is responsible for assisting the church in planning, coordinating and promoting the youth programs of the church as well as special youth projects, assignments and events. This person needs a proven ability to relate well to young people and their families from diverse backgrounds and also have an understanding of the complexities of the challenges facing them. The candidate should have experience organizing and leading effective youth activities with proven positive outcomes.

This person needs to be able to prepare and lead worship services at Martin Luther, and provide leadership and insight for the congregation, focusing on building the congregation and their outreach within the community, in addition to ministering to the sick and shut-ins.

Previous experience as a church leader and youth worker or a person who has or is working toward a degree in church work is preferred. The position will begin ASAP. Salary is competitive, based on qualifications and experience.

For more information and a complete job description, please contact Pastor Jerald Rayl by either calling 567-395-0143, emailing him at pastor1@firststjohn.com, or reach out through our website at www.firststjohn.com.

GRADUATE RECOGNITION



With the uncertainty of our church service schedule at this time, we may have to postpone our graduate recognition until a later date. But we will begin to collect our graduate's information now.

If you have a high school or college graduate in your family, please complete this form and either mail or email (office@firststjohn.com) it to the church. If you email the information, you don't need the form, unless you have scanning capability at home. Thanks!

NAME OF GRADUATE

GRADUATED FROM

DEGREE EARNED

NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

FUTURE PLANS (SCHOOL, WORK, ETC.):

First St. John Prayer Chain

Crisis Prayer List: For those who need prayers in an urgent matter such as upcoming surgery, emergency medical care (ICU), etc. Individuals will be moved to "Chronic Prayer List" after the 1st month unless a prayer chain contact is contacted:

Terry Crowell
Family of Dylan (no last name given)
Family of Margie Myers
Family of Chuck Neal
David Poore
Family of Dorothy Zeadker

Chronic Prayer List: For those who need prayers for ongoing serious situations such as cancer treatments, ongoing medical struggles, recovery and/or personal situations. Individuals will be moved off after 3 months unless a prayer chain contact is contacted about special circumstances:

Lee & Karyl Antoine
Lynn Balogh
Karen Bless
Mitchell Broyles
The Burk Family
Rosie Burtch
Jeannette Carlo
Pat Christy
Greg Contat
Marjorie Counterman
Nancy Coy
Dick Crouse
Hannah Culler & family
Olivia & Delaney Dawkins
Joy DeVore & family
Chiara Del-Mace
Ann Dudics
Robin Duck & family
Andy Dupris
Dorothy Felderman
Sara Florian
Sharon Grames
Toni Henline
Karen Huber
Pastor Beth Huener
Dana Justice
Phyllis Kelly
Mark Kieswetter
Joanne Koch
Tom Kohn

Carole Kolibar
Ada Kreger
The Lee Family
Heidi LeGrand
Teresa McFarland
Joyce Martin
Bonnie Lutzmann
Donald Meyer
Donna Miller
Jason Monti & family
Mary Bell Moore
Bill Morse
Susan Murphy
Joyce Ostapowicz
Pfouts Family
Pam Pirolli
Mike Ray
Courtney Reed
Michael Rheinbolt & family
Steven Riegle
Logan Roberts
Karen Rowley
Neil Rutledge
Erich Schiddel
Andrew Schlegel
Connie Singlar
Skylar (no last name given)
LuAnn Spoerl
Michelle Stanberry
Diane Swartz
Becky Thielan
Joan Tilton
Barb Tischinae
Samuel Unnerstall
Steve Uzi
Jane Vargo
Jim Vogelsang
Nick Wasserman
Barb West
Kellyn Wyngate
John & Grace Yard
Raetta Zeisler

Check the list and let a prayer chain contact know if someone can be moved off the list.

Prayer Chain Contacts

Carol Abbey 419-351-9795
or cabbeyrn@aol.com

Lynn Folk	419-309-7977
Donna Koehn	419-693-5030
Gloria Ross	419-836-7166