



# St. John's

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## Ev. Lutheran Church

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AUGUST 2020

### PLANTING AN APPLE TREE AT THE END OF TIME

There's an apocryphal story about Luther that goes something like this. One day someone asked him what he'd do if it were told to him that tomorrow the Lord Jesus would return to judge the living and the dead. His reply, at least according to the story, was this: "I'd plant an apple tree."

Well, as I write this the Governor of Kansas plans another announcement soon. According to the numbers, social transmission of coronavirus remains too high not to impose further restrictions. This will lead to further wrangling and agonizing on the part of our county commissioners about whether they will adopt the new orders for our county, modify them, or reject them. And I've lost count now, but whatever happens, it will represent something like the 6<sup>th</sup> or 7<sup>th</sup> major change in the way we do business at church. By the time this reaches you the announcement may have already been made, and what I write below may well be moot.

Even so, we've decided to plant an apple tree. Here it is.

#### **Sunday School & All Sunday Bible Studies Set to Resume on Sunday 6 September, 10 a.m.**

As Pr. Kerns announced to the voters on Sunday 26 July, we're planning beginning Sunday, 6 September, to resume Sunday School and Bible Study. The Board of Parish Education and Board of Trustees have consulted and made extensive and detailed plans—as we've done throughout the pandemic—to keep everyone safe. One of the elements of such planning is limiting the time together. So Sunday School and Adult, High School, and Jr. High Bible classes will meet for just half an hour, each in their separate spaces, with adequate social distancing and all the due precautions. Our Sunday schedule will be modified so that all nave Divine Services will accommodate up to 72 faithful, while the courtyard will remain at 45. But here's the neat thing: since we can accommodate up to 72 faithful in the nave, we'll be gaining 81 slots for people to attend church per week. This allows us to use the 10:00 a.m. slot for Sunday School and all the Bible classes and allows us to drop the Monday Divine Services (we'll bring back the latter if there's more demand for slots than our set-up allows).

#### **Abbreviated Sound Words Academy—Catechesis Only—Set to Resume on 16 September**

Our approach during the pandemic has been to identify the key things, make the key things our priority, and bring back other things as the lifting of restrictions permit. Unfortunately, while the entirety of the Sound Words Academy programming has been well received by the congregation, we've been unable to find a feasible way to keep offering everything we have in the past and still keep it safe for everyone who attends. So our plan beginning 16 September is to focus on the core of Sound Words Academy: Catechesis & Evening Prayer. Catechesis will begin at 5:55, and we'll offer three different classes: Youth Catechesis I (for 6<sup>th</sup>-graders and other beginners); Youth Catechesis II (the last two years for advanced catechumens); and Adult Catechesis. Immediately after Catechesis we'll have Evening Prayer at 7:00 p.m., for up to 45 to attend. Again, due precautions have been taken to keep everyone safe. As soon as restrictions permit, we'll open up more educational opportunities for the congregation.

#### **What Happens if Shawnee County Adopts Phase-2 Gathering Restrictions of 15 People?**

Well, let's just say that 15-person restrictions wouldn't be ideal growing conditions for our apple tree. But even under less than ideal conditions we can continue to fertilize it. If we have to go back down to

Divine Services with no more than 15 faithful, we'll adopt the schedule we used back in May and June. Unfortunately, we'd have to drop Sunday School and Bible Study, though. And although we'd have to drop Evening Prayer, we plan to continue to hold Youth and Adult Catechesis face-to-face. No class is projected to be larger than 8 catechumens, making it possible for us to maintain social distancing and other precautions. And we'd still be able to fulfill at least part of the purpose of Wednesday Evening Prayer: the last half-hour of class from 7 till 7:30 would be devoted to a little study of the Gospel for the upcoming Sunday.

The anecdote about Luther and the apple tree is actually quite optimistic. It says that the Lord has placed each and every one of us here for a purpose, and that that purpose doesn't end until it ends. It's easy to get down during these times, but let's not. Just because the end of the age is surely coming doesn't mean we throw up our hands in despair. Instead, we continue to receive the gifts the Lord wants to give us in this life, and having received them, in turn love and serve our neighbor. So let's do it.



**Senior Pastor - Rev. J. S. Bruss, ext. 104**  
**Associate Pastor – Rev. D. M. Kerns, ext. 101**  
**Kantor - Bethany M. Johnson**  
**TLS Teachers – Erin Grass, Josh Grass, Andrea Kosmicki**

### **HYMN OF THE MONTH FOR AUGUST**

*“What Is the World to Me” LSB 730*

Hard times in life allow us to contemplate many things. I think it goes without saying that these past few months have been one of those “hard times” that we will never forget. It is during times like these when we are in a position to think about what means the most to us, especially when we see, even more clearly, how much the world wants us to trust in itself and all of its treasures.

The hymn “What Is the World to Me” (LSB 730) reflects the Romans 12:2 passage, “Do not be conformed to this world,” and points to Jesus as our true treasure, our heavenly happiness. We learn in the Gospel reading from Luke 16:1-13 that no servant can serve two masters: God and money. In this sense, money includes possessions and anything that appeals to our senses. God’s Word clearly teaches us that everything in this world is rubbish compared to knowing Jesus Christ by faith (Phil. 3:1-9).

The authorship of this hymn is not certain. However, we know that it was translated by August Crull, an immigrant from Germany who graduated from Concordia Seminary in St. Louis in 1862 and became a pastor and teacher. Earlier sources of this hymn have published it with the heading “disdain for the world” or “rejection of the world.” The literal German translation of the first phrase, “What is the world to me,” is “What do I ask of the world?” The answer to this question is “nothing.” We have nothing to ask for the world, because it cannot offer true long-lasting happiness or eternal peace that is found only in Christ.

Stanza 1 expresses the boldness that Christians have when acknowledging that having Jesus as our “treasure” and “soul’s delight” is valued more than the world and its vaunted pleasures. He alone is our treasure where we find peace and rest. Stanza 2 tells us that the world seeks to be “praised and honored by the mighty.” But compared to Jesus, the mighty in this world are actually “frail and flighty.” True honor and praise belong to God alone, because our righteousness is found in Him.

Stanza 3 compares the wealth of this world to the wealth of knowing Jesus. Do we ever have enough money to be content? We do not according to our sinful nature, which always seeks more than what we have or need. “My Jesus is my wealth,” we sing in this stanza. What a marvelous treasure that we have now in Jesus and that we will fully experience in heaven while our “gold” is left behind.

Stanza 4 makes a list of the things that Jesus means to us: treasure, life, wealth, friend, love, pleasure, joy, crown, bliss – everything in body and soul that He has given to us. Therefore we pray as God’s blessed children the following prayer:

Almighty God, heavenly Father, You have called us to be Your children and heirs of Your gracious promises in Christ Jesus. Grant us Your Holy Spirit that we may forsake all covetous desires and the inordinate love of riches. Deliver us from the pursuit of passing things that we may seek the kingdom of Your Son and trust in His righteousness and so find blessedness and peace; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. ("Against the love of money," LSB p. 311)

*Bethany M Johnson*

**You are invited!**  
**2020 SJELC Worship Conference**

"The Church at Worship: Learning from Our Past as We Move into the Future"

Dr. Paul Grime, keynote speaker

**Saturday, August 22**

**9:00-3:30 p.m.**

Breakaway Sectionals for pastors, musicians, AND lay members

More information on the schedule and sectionals on our website:

<https://stjohnlcmstopeka.org/worship/music/#2020>

Questions? Contact Bethany Johnson

**TUNE IN TO THE LUTHERAN HOUR IN TOPEKA**

The Lutheran Hour is broadcast here in Topeka on FM 92.5 KCTV on Sundays at 8:00 a.m.  
and on AM 580 WIBW on Sundays at 7:30 a.m.

**2020 FLOWER CALENDAR**

Please check the Flower Calendar on the bulletin board outside of the church offices. If you would like to provide flowers for a particular service this coming year, sign your name and phone number by the date of your choice. Upcoming available dates include: September 27; October 31; November 22 & 26; and December 20 & 27.

**NO MONTHLY BREAKFAST IN AUGUST**

There will be no monthly breakfast in August as we continue to be under the pandemic restrictions.

*We pray with the Lord willing, that come September, we can join together again for our monthly breakfast.*

**DOORSTEP NEWS**

**For August 2020**

Doorstep would like to thank everyone who donated items for Christmas in July, money for our Summer Cash Bash or as part of the Envista Cares Challenge in July! They continue to help people where they can with emergency services during this time of pandemic, and the clothing room is now open twice a week for clients.

[Sign Up for Doorstep's Neighbor Helping Neighbor Walk/5K Run!](#)

Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup> is the date for this year's fundraiser! Doorstep is still planning to move forward with the fundraiser and make changes, if needed, as time progresses. You can sign up to participate yourself for \$30 including a t-shirt (deadline September 16<sup>th</sup> to order a shirt) or sponsor a walker/runner! Those getting sponsors will get a free t-shirt with pledges of \$100 or more. All proceeds will benefit Doorstep, Inc.

The race will start/end from shelter houses 1 & 2 at Lake Shawnee. The Walk/Run will start at 2:00 pm with celebrity starter, Chris Fisher from WIBW-TV 13. They will have some entertainment prior to the start and after the walk/run return to the shelter houses for a snacks & drinks!

You can sign up on our website: [www.DoorstepTopeka.org](http://www.DoorstepTopeka.org) after August 1<sup>st</sup>. Sign-up and sponsor forms are also available from the website or congregations.

**Save the date...** Doorstep plans to take orders for **Cinnamon Rolls and Tamales September 11 – 27**, with delivery the weekend of October 16. You can mark your calendars to stock your freezers!

### **ST. JOHN'S 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION**

In 2024, SJELC will be celebrating our 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, but it's not too early to get started with compiling the congregational history. Like most congregations, we will most likely put together a memento history book or booklet, but we may also create a video history. Pastor Goetz has graciously agreed to be an honorary chairperson and we have three additional volunteers, but we could use additional people to sort through our history and develop our final products. Please contact the church office if you are interested in volunteering particularly if you have some video editing skills, writing or editing skills, photography skills, an interest in history or you just want to help in any way and be involved with this once in a lifetime opportunity.

### **SUNDAY SCHOOL NEWS FOR AUGUST 2020**

#### *Sunday School and Bible Class Resume September 6*

It was with a heavy heart that Sunday School and Bible Class were suspended due to the constraints put into place during the recent months. We have worked hard and used out-of-the-box thinking in order to create a schedule that would allow Sunday School and Bible Class to resume in person. Look for future communication regarding the specific schedule, but make plans now to join us on September 6.





*Growing God's Children*  
for generations to come  
Topeka Lutheran School

## A PRAYER

Lord God, our Maker and Redeemer. Once again, we come before you to ask your blessings on our Grow Our Children campaign that it will continue to be successful as we strive to keep Topeka Lutheran School a viable option to all our congregation members. We especially give You thanks that You have blessed Christ Lutheran Church at this time by sending Pastor Ben Micheel to lead this congregation at this critical time in our efforts to bring Jesus Christ to all who seek after Him. As TLS prepares to begin another school year bless all the staff and workers at the school and the children who will attend to learn about You.

All this we ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

## TOTAL COMMITMENTS

### Capital Campaign

Total Amount Committed: \$817,243 Total Pledged

Gifts Received: \$429,100

Thank you to those families who made a new gift to the campaign!

**SUPPORT TOPEKA  
LUTHERAN.**

**DONATE TODAY!**

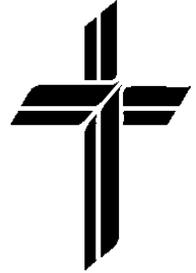
[https://www.topekalutheran.org/  
pledge-tracker](https://www.topekalutheran.org/pledge-tracker)

## TLS UPDATE FROM PRINCIPAL FRANCIS

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." Hebrews 13:8 Clinging to this truth has become a focus of daily life around Topeka Lutheran School. Topeka Lutheran School staff members are making plans for in-person learning to begin in the late summer. Every reasonable precaution will be included in the planning process along with a review of parents' concerns and hopes. A team of TLS teachers, parents, and Board of Directors members will review the plan for eventual approval by the Board of Directors in August. As of late July, there is a great deal of uncertainty regarding the effects for Topeka Lutheran School of two executive orders recently signed by Governor Laura Kelly. Please keep the families and staff of Topeka Lutheran School in your prayers as we navigate these challenging times.

## ADDITIONAL UPDATES

- ◆ Welcome to Pastor Ben and Rachel Micheel and their family to the TLS family! Pastor Micheel was installed July 12 as the new pastor at Christ Lutheran Church.
- ◆ TLS will receive approximately \$18,500 in proceeds from the recent Luke Savage Memorial golf benefit. Thank you to the Savage family and friends for their faithful support and generosity to TLS while honoring Luke's memory.
- ◆ A shout-out to Faith Lutheran Jr. Youth and sponsors Curt Loupe, Judson Marlatt, DCE Heather McCormick and Stephanie Saunders for cleaning up the playground, several classrooms, and interior walls of the school! All looks great and we thank you!
- ◆ TLS has been selected by the LWML Kansas District to receive a two-year grant award which will be used to enhance and improve the library and resources. Thank you to this important organization for their support!



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## THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH

*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matthew 28:19–20a)*  
So that we may obtain faith in Christ, God instituted the ministry of teaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. Through the gospel and sacraments, as through means, God gives the Holy Spirit who produces faith, where and when He wills, in those who hear the gospel. (*Augsburg Confession*, Article 5)