



# St. John's

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## Ev. Lutheran Church

VOL. 145 NO. 09 MONTHLY

SEPTEMBER 2020

### SWITCHING OFF BABYLON TV

I've been reading St. Augustine's *City of God*. It is dense, long—timeless.

Augustine points out that there are two cities—the city of God and the city of Man. Both of these cities span back to the days of the sons of Adam. There is a city that the Christian longs for—one made without hands (2 Corinthians 5:1), built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). Covid-19 can't eradicate this city and neither Republicans nor Democrats govern it. It seems that the older one gets, the more the City of God is desired, where one prays, "Lord, come quickly."

On the other hand, there's Babylon. This is the city that detests God. It's the city that makes idols in their own image. It's the city headed by the Devil. It's fallen, warped and perverted. And yet, surprisingly, the City of Man is what most people fall in love with. Most of humanity prefer this city to the City of God, for they white-knuckle all that it has to offer, consume every bit of its pleasure and hope to stay in it just a little bit longer.

At one point Augustine notes that the City of God, *i.e.*, Babylon means confusion. Go back to the Tower of Babel incident in Genesis 11. *There the Lord confused the language of the whole world. From there the Lord scattered them over the face of the whole earth* (Genesis 11:9). Babel means confusion, hence Babylon. Nothing Augustine said was anything new to me. But reading it this time made me pause and take stock of what's been going on in my head since the beginning of 2020.

When the Coronavirus first hit the headlines, and before it came to our shores, I was engrossed in reading whatever I could about it. I did this in fear: What would happen if it came to America? What would it do to the Church? What about St. John's? It started innocuous at first, but then I found myself overdosing on every single news source available. I didn't stop. What started with the pandemic, blossomed into the events surrounding the death of George Floyd. Then it was the protests and increased lawlessness across the country followed now by the upcoming election. It did not matter if the news was left, right, mainstream or grass-roots. You name it—I was reading it or listening to it.

My day is the same as yours. In order to consume what experts and pundits were saying about the pandemic and the talking heads were prognosticating about the future, I set aside my devotional readings. I surmised that Bible reading could wait. God understood. But to my shame listening to, meditating upon and worrying about the circumstances of Babylon left me just as confused in my thinking as that city is; the city which is doomed—slated for destruction. It left my soul running on fumes. Your soul will become empty, too, if you do the same.

Sure—it's terribly difficult to avoid the news completely. It's ubiquitous. But limit what you consume from the City of Man. Use your time more wisely. Instead of being informed by whatever wind of the day blows, let us do as St. Paul says, "*Do not be conformed to this world, (the City of Man) but be transformed by the renewal of your mind...*" (Romans 12:2). Instead of confusion, what does Jesus say? *Your Word is truth* (John 17:17b).

I determined the day that I read that bit about Babylon in Augustine, that I would stop tuning in so much to Babylon TV and no longer listen to the siren songs of the City of Man. I decided to fill my morning time with what should have never been set aside—regardless of whatever is going on. I encourage you to join me in this endeavor.

This is why I am elated about Sunday School classes starting up at St. John's during the 10:00 a.m. time slot on September 6. Moreover, I am thrilled about Sound Words Academy beginning on September 16, albeit in a very limited fashion—youth and adult catechesis, with Evening Prayer open to the congregation. Regardless of the offerings made at church, let me encourage you to get back into daily Bible reading. There is a wonderful podcast made by Pr. Will Weedon called *The Word Endures Forever* that I highly recommend as well as what Pr. Bruss, Pr. Ockree and I are doing on the [www.thepluckedchicken.com](http://www.thepluckedchicken.com), where we are going through the Gospel according to St. John. If you would prefer to read, take advantage of Concordia House's *Treasury of Daily Prayer*. This is another invaluable resource.

May the Lord Jesus keep you and me both steadfast in His Word, until the Last Day, when the dead are raised and the saints in Christ stand with Him in eternal peace and bliss, citizens fully of the City of God. —*Pastor Kerns*

**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**

## **SOUND WORDS ACADEMY AND YOUTH & ADULT CATECHESIS 2020-2021**

It with a heavy heart that we come to the start of the September unable to say that we'll be able to re-launch the entire programming surrounding Sound Words Academy. During the pandemic, with all the changes it has brought nearly every couple of weeks, we've focused on taking care of the core functions of our congregation: preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments in the Divine Service, homebound visitation when and where possible, and catechesis. This has to do as much with the time commitment necessary just to see to these core functions with the limitations placed upon us as it does with the time commitment triggered by every unexpected change in health orders.

For the foreseeable future we'll have to continue to focus on just core functions—and that has an impact on Sound Words Academy. We will with regrets be unable to have our regular dinner, Rhythm of Faith, Jr. Lutherans, the adult Bible study and Young Adults & College students (YACS / LCMS-U).

That said, we will continue to use Wednesday evenings for Youth and Adult Catechesis. The pastors will be getting in touch with the families of Youth Catechumens soon (if they haven't already by the time you read this) for our annual pre-Catechesis home visits; and we're getting in touch with prospective adult catechumens. The schedule for Wednesday evenings begins at 5:55 and ends around 7:35. In the 5:55-6:50 period YCat I will meet separately, YCat II will meet separately, and Adult Catechesis will meet separately. From 7:00 till 7:35 catechesis for all catechumens (YCat I, YCat II, and Adult Catechesis) will meet together in the nave for Evening Prayer. Evening Prayer will also be open to other members of the congregation who'd like to attend. With a six-foot-social-distancing capacity of 72, we hope that others in the congregation will look forward to this opportunity to gather with all the catechumens.

Catechesis and Evening Prayer will begin on Wednesday evening, 16 September. Please enter by the south / aka glass / aka Luther Hall doors and arrive by 5:50 so that we can start classes on time.

We look forward to seeing catechumens at 5:50 and other congregation members at 7:00 for Evening Prayer.

+ pax +  
*Pastor Bruss*

### **HYMN OF THE MONTH FOR SEPTEMBER**

"The Will of God Is Always Best" LSB 758

By *Bethany Johnson*

God's will is always good. "Even in the midst of death?" you may ask. "Even when I am suffering or enduring the pain of uncertain times?" Yes. When Job suffered loss he immediately said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). He acknowledged God's blessings in the midst of his grief. We may ask, "Is death really God's will? Is it really considered 'good'?" Even in the deepest depths of grief, pain, and loss, as Job experienced, God gives us the comfort and confidence in the true joys that await us in heaven. God's will is best, because He has defeated death for us and keeps us firm in the faith until we pass through this valley of sorrows to Himself in heaven.

The hymn, "The Will of God Is Always Best" (LSB 758), was written by Albrecht von Preussen (1490-1568), the duke of Prussia and one of the leading princes of the Lutheran Reformation. During the Reformation he helped develop evangelical worship services, encouraged congregational singing and the use of hymnals, and was a strong advocate for good education. Albrecht's motto, "Trust God alone!" fits well with the theme of this hymn, which he wrote after the death of his wife, Dorothea in 1547. Even as he was stricken with grief, he sought comfort in Christ and wrote these comforting words to demonstrate God's unfailing love for us.

Stanza 1 acknowledges that God's will is "always best and shall be done forever." God gives blessings to those whose faith is in Him. He will never leave us nor forsake us, because we are His children in Baptism. God also "chastens with forbearing," meaning that He disciplines us at times for our good, but never beyond what we can bear.

Stanza 2 points to God as our comfort, trust, hope, and life. It is a statement of faith in God and His just and wise counsel that He provides. We approach God not with a blind trust, but with the faith given to us through Jesus. We look to Him with all confidence that He will be our stay at all times, as He never sleeps nor slumbers (Psalm 121:1).

Stanzas 3 and 4 reflect the meaning to the Third Petition of the Lord's Prayer, which describes how God's will is done: "when He breaks and hinders every evil plan and purpose of the devil...and when strengthens and keeps us firm in His Word and faith until we die." In these stanzas Albrecht recognizes his sinful condition and the temptations he faces. He prays that God would keep him firm in his faith in the midst of temptation, fear, and death. Albrecht commends his soul to God's keeping, since God has won the victory for him and has secured for him eternal life.

Even when our prayers may seem unanswered, God always answers them according to His will. We surrender to God's care and not to death, knowing that God is faithful and will deliver our souls to eternal life and the everlasting joy of heaven. Even when we feel suffering, pain, or worry, God's love surpasses all that we think, see, or feel. What comfort we have, that despite everything around us, God is faithful and just and will keep us firm in the faith through His Word!

## ST. JOHN'S FINANCIAL REPORT THRU JULY 2020

	<u>Budgeted</u>	<u>Actual</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>YTD Benchmark</u>
<u>Income</u>	\$424,423	\$405,068	55.67%	58.33%
<u>Expense</u>	\$434,808	\$424,784	56.99%	58.33%

## PARENT TEACHER LEAGUE FOR TLS

As you are aware, we are in an unusual situation with the upcoming school year in light of the pandemic. With current mandates requiring social distancing, mask wearing and smaller gatherings, the logistics of PTL events and fundraisers will be very challenging. We are thinking outside the box to come up with ideas to make this year as enjoyable and safe as we can for TLS kids and staff members. Last year, we discussed adding picnic tables to the paved areas next to the playground at the school for fellowship, learning and lunch time. We have decided to proceed with this project, and are brainstorming on fundraising ideas for additional work at the school. We also have some fun ideas for events we might hold in place of those that we would do during a normal school year, which will involve students, staff and a minimal number of volunteers.

Having said all this, please realize that plans could (and probably will) change as the school year progresses. If you would like to make a special donation to the outdoor tables, please mail a check to TLS and make the check payable to "Topeka Lutheran School PTL." The tables will cost around \$600 each and we hope to purchase 6 of them. Or if you would like to donate using Thrivent Action Team dollars to a specific project, we would be glad to work with you on the details.

We are so incredibly grateful for your continued support and prayers as we navigate this year!

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

Looking ahead, winter will be here before we know it. Ugh! St. John's is looking for volunteers to help shovel snow on Sunday mornings if needed. If you would be willing to help contact Jeff LaCrone at [jlacrone@stjlcms.org](mailto:jlacrone@stjlcms.org) or call the church office at 354-7132.

## 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 20; October 31; November 22 & 26; and December 20 & 27.

## NO MONTHLY BREAKFAST IN SEPTEMBER

We know this sounds like a broken record, but there will be no monthly breakfast in September as we continue to be under the pandemic restrictions.

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

## DOORSTEP NEWS

### For September 2020

[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!

## ADULT AND HIGH SCHOOL BIBLE STUDIES: THE BIG BIBLE BRUSH-UP

The Bible is a most unusual book. Covering thousands of years of human history and written by more than 40 human authors, the Bible is not simply a collection of writings but one book with amazing continuity. Its unusual character is due to the fact that it is indeed the Word of God even though written by human authors. **The Big Bible Brush-Up** takes adults and high school students through every major story and event of the Bible, tracing the work of God from beginning to end. Taking our outline from *A Bible History* published by Concordia Publishing House, Pr. Bruss and Pr. Kerns will work through the essential episodes of the Old and New Testaments in chronological order. These stories are essential to knowing your Bible and will keep the child of God from being *tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine* (Ephesians 4:14) and *“prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you* (1 Peter 3:15). Sunday School for all ages begins on September 6 at the 10:00 a.m. time slot. The adult class will meet in Luther Hall while High School students will meet in Rm. 202.

## 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. We plan to offer our regular Sunday School classes through 8<sup>th</sup> grade, high school Bible Study, and two adult Bible Studies in the 10:00 – 10:45 period. High school Bible Study and the main adult Bible Study will be *The Big Bible Brush-Up*, featuring the chief episodes of the Old and New Testaments; Dennis Hintz will continue his study of Romans, meeting in the elevator vestibule on the lowermost level.

If you have any questions, contact the church office or speak with Pastor Bruss, Pastor Kerns, Dennis Hintz, or Mrs. Kosmicki.

## Campaign Newsletter – September 2020



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

### A PRAYER

Lord God, Heavenly Father our Maker and Redeemer. As we begin a new school year at TLS, we ask that You would guide and direct the principal, teachers and staff at the school as they continue to prepare to teach the children entrusted to them by You in the knowledge of Your Son, Jesus Christ. We also ask You to continue to bless our Grow God's Children campaign as we work to pay off the debt of the past few years to keep TLS viable and a place where forgiveness and salvation are taught in truth and purity.

In Christ's Name we pray, Amen.

### TOTAL COMMITMENTS

#### **Capital Campaign**

Total Amount Committed: \$817,243 Total

Pledged Gifts Received: \$441,039

Thank you to those families who made a special gift to the capital campaign during August!

### ADDITIONAL UPDATES

The Burglary Recovery Fund has been removed as a gift option, as the insurance settlement received by the school covered the expenses of replacement of electronics and repair of damaged doors. Thank you for your generous gifts and prayers as the school recovered from these unfortunate incidents.

## **SUPPORT TOPEKA LUTHERAN TODAY! CLICK TO DONATE.**

<https://www.topekalutheran.org/pledge-tracker>

### **TOPEKA LUTHERAN SCHOOL - PTL UPDATE**

My name is Sarah Caleb, a member at Faith and the PTL president at Topeka Lutheran School. I'm sending this message to introduce myself and update you a bit on what the PTL has been planning thus far for the upcoming school year. The PTL's vice president this year is Erin Snethen, who is also a member at Faith.

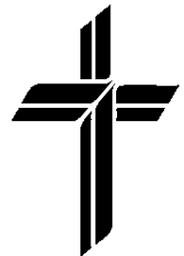
Our treasurer is Megan Brassel of St. John's, and our secretary is Amanda Adams from Christ. Sue Francik is also playing an amazing part helping Megan get the hang of being treasurer!

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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)