



St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church *Serving the Lord for 116 Years* **August 2020**

Jonah: God's Grace When We Think We Have Run Too Far!

If you were raised in a Christian church, attended Sunday school, or ever picked up a children's book about the Bible, when you hear about the story of Jonah, it is a charming story. Jonah is a naughty boy who did not want to listen to God, was swallowed by a whale, and was spit back out safely on dry land, cheerfully ready to finally listen to God. In some ways, these are helpful to familiarize children with stories of the Bible that are genuinely dark stories when accurately read by adults.

The story of Jonah is about a man who was hand-chosen by God, declared righteous, and called by God to serve His Church as a Prophet who was to preach God's Word. In Jonah's call to the vocation of Prophet, to preach God's Word, not just anywhere, he was called to preach to the city of Nineveh. For those who may not know about Nineveh, it was a big city, roughly five hundred miles from Joppa, where the port was that Jonah got on the boat to Tarshish. Not only was it far away, but it was also a city of Gentiles who were religiously and morally broken, much like what we currently are seeing in modern-day America. They were people who got extremely angry and even threatened the lives of people who were critical about anything in their lives. Nineveh was a place that not too many preachers would sign up to deliver the message of repentance, especially if they wanted to live much longer.

Jonah (who was sent to Nineveh where the culture was hostile) was the son of Amittai, who was killed in Nineveh by the false prophets of the Gentile god Baal in 1st Kings. Jonah wanted the people of Nineveh, who he held great anger towards, to suffer. Jonah knew that if he delivered the mission given to him, the people who he hated would not receive the wrath he felt they deserved. Out of fear or anger towards Yahweh, Jonah abandoned his calling from God and ran for the city of Tarshish. Because he felt God's Word and faith in Yahweh, Jonah began to experience the guilt and condemnation of his life by Yahweh punishing him for his sin. Jonah's actions also nearly cost the life of the sailors who were traveling with Jonah when God used a storm on the sea to hopefully wake Jonah up and return to the saving faith in the true eternal triune God.

Rather than turning back to the Lord and trusting that God's plan was best, Jonah was still blinded by his sin and unfortunately decided that death was the best way to escape his guilt. After convincing the sailors to throw him into the raging water, Jonah thought he would drown and finally escape God. He was wrong and was eaten by a giant whale. Most people would think he was dead, but he was finally able to escape the mission given to him by God. Thanks be to God, the answer is no. When the story of Jonah seems to be a story of suicide and God's wrath, God goes entirely in the opposite direction that you and I would assume would happen. God takes the saddest of stories of the most heart-breaking situations and shows us what He can do with sin, death, and the devil.

Jonah, sitting in a dark and smelly grave inside the belly of the whale, hears the voice of God. Jonah is not dead, and he did not escape God. What is beautiful about this story is that even though we would expect Jonah to be punished for his sin, God has Jonah right where He wanted him and gave compassion, mercy, and new life to Jonah. God forced the whale to throw up and delivered Jonah safely on the dry land.

Many of us have felt like Jonah or may have someone in our lives who is a modern-day Jonah. They are someone who was raised in the Church, was very dedicated for many years, but now find themselves perhaps feeling too far away from God or so broken that God would only punish them. Jonah reminds us that when we are baptized in the name of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you may run from God, you may be angry at God, and you may even be in a place that is so dark and hopeless that you feel that not even God can help, God's answer is No! You, in your baptism, are still loved, you are not too far gone. If death seems like your only escape, God says No!

The story of Jonah is the story of a man chosen, condemned, and redeemed. Despite Jonah's continual running from God and choosing the selfish choice of suicide, Jonah was never able to escape our Heavenly Father, who had chosen him. Christ Jesus thankfully was not selfish and was selfless. Though the world rejected Jesus, He died so that the world that hated and rejected Him would be saved. Christ Jesus died not just for those who have died of cancer, car accidents, or old age but because of sin, Jesus died for those whose last act of sin brought forth their death via the means of suicide.

Suicide should never be understood as brave, honorable, or an understandable way one ends their life because of extreme pain or mental illness. We also should not jump to the conclusion that suicide is the unforgivable sin. When someone dies from suicide, we should not automatically assume they are eternally condemned. Not even suicide can separate us from the love of our Heavenly Father when we are baptized into Christ.

During this season of life, many are experiencing great fear, anxiety, and depression because COVID-19 has caused people to isolate themselves from others and has caused many to lose their jobs or businesses. Some are also feeling a great sense of grief, seeing the United States being torn apart in a way our country has not seen since the end of the Civil War in 1865. Seeing all that is going on, it is understandable that we can be scared or angry. Let us remember that like Jonah, our Heavenly Father has chosen us as well in baptism. Through the vocations we have as a parent, grandparent, teacher, nurse, volunteer, sheriff, or business owner, our Heavenly Father will use you for His glory in these tough times. He will not abandon you in this life, in the grave, or for all eternity.

Sincerely,

Pastor Ben Hollingsead

St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church – LCMC
Church Council Minutes

Date: 6/15/2020

Present: Vickey Nelson, Harvey & Roxann Berg, Derek Fitcher, Pastor Ben, Jim Johnson, Bethany Hardy, Nicole Anderson, Linda Welch, Sue Lein

Absent: Hal Satter, Patha Vue, Paul Dahlstrom

Meeting called to order at 7:02 PM by Linda Welch.

Pastor Ben opened with prayer.

Minutes Approved

Nicole motioned to approve the minutes from 5/18/20, Vickey seconded the motion.
Motion carried.

Financial Report

May 2020 Financial Report was reviewed.

Pastor's Report

Services have been open for 3 weeks. Each week we have a few more joining. With one service there is a nice blend of the 8:00 typically attendees and 9:30 attendees. Planning on making this 9:00 a bit more blended service of traditional and contemporary. Getting some good, positive feedback from participants.

Some technology has donated that Pastor Ben is going to be experimenting with.

Some concern about the projector or the projector bulb as the lighting fluctuates from light to dark.

Problem solving confirmation service.

Celebrating 116 years this month!

Council Minutes Continue—

New Business

Paycheck Protection Program

Congress changed forgiveness rules. Main point is that full forgiveness is that payroll needs to be 60% rather than 75%. We are a little short on the payroll portion due to not having a secretary or janitor at the start of the loan.

Timeframe for money to be spent extended from 8 week spending period to 24 week period. This will help us make up for the weeks without some of the staff above.

Janitor

There were some people that were interested, but are no longer interested.

Sue made a motion to increase the wage for the janitor to \$15 per hour, Nicole seconded. Motion approved.

Semi-Annual Meeting

July 26th at 10:30

Property

Roof is near completion. Just a couple of small things left to do, then they will send us the final invoice.

Working on a priorities list. The top priority is to take care of the furnaces as we have six of them that need to be replaced. Next they will prioritize which ones need to be replaced first. Another priority are the gutters.

Flea Market

The committee will discuss if they are going to reschedule this for a fall event.

By Law Update

Chapter 13: Discipline of Members needs to be updated to better define threatening behaviors that may require us to bypass our typical process.

Derek motioned to adjourn at 8:34 pm, Jim seconded, motion carried.

The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Respectfully submitted by,

Bethany Hardy, Council Secretary

St. John's Lutheran Church Financial Report

June 2020

Budget Offerings (4 Sundays)	\$14,071.76
Actual Offerings Received	\$6,735.00
<i>Offering Budget Shortage</i>	(\$7,336.76)

Postage	\$0.00
Phone	\$80.00
Advertising/Evangelism	\$22.00
Worship Supplies	\$138.00
Pastor's Discretion Exp. Acct	\$328.00
Computer Operations	\$125.00
Payroll Service Fees	\$58.00

Administrative Expenses **\$751.00**

Excel Electric	\$279.00
Gas	\$80.00
City Water & Trash	\$72.00
Custodial Supplies-Misc.	\$39.00
Building Repair & Maint.	\$141.00

Building Expenses **\$611.00**

<i>Employee Salaries</i>	\$8,788.00
<i>Visiting Pastors</i>	\$0.00
Work comp Ins	\$0.00
Total Salaries	\$8,788.00

Christian Outreach **\$66.00**

Total Expenses **\$10,216.00**

End of Month Total	(\$3,481.00)
(offerings minus expenses)	

Check Book Balance	\$97,728.20
Liabilities	\$14,150.00
<i>Actual Cash Balance</i>	\$83,578.20

Dedicated accounts balance:	\$94,728.00
Church Account Balance:	(\$11,149.80)

General Offering Balance: Year to Date:	(\$19,239.76)
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If you have any questions regarding this report, please contact the church council.

Guidance for Gatherings: Faith-based Communities, Places of Worship, and Ceremonies

This guidance is for planning or hosting in-person services and ceremonies in faith-based communities, places of worship, funeral homes, and other venues that may offer gathering space for weddings, funerals, worship services, rituals, prayer meetings, scripture studies, or similar activities. For receptions and other gatherings before or after the ceremony, see the Guidance for Safe Celebrations and Events (www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/safeevents.pdf).

Large gatherings continue to present significant risk for increasing the spread of COVID-19. All faith communities are encouraged to provide remote services and choose **not** to open or host large gatherings. If there is evidence of COVID-19 spread within your faith community, you may be advised to stop offering in-person services until it is safe to return. Contact your local or state health department for further guidance in these situations.

Requirements

✓ **Masks and face coverings:** As of July 25, 2020, people in Minnesota are required to wear a face covering in all public indoor spaces and businesses, per Executive Order 20-81. Additionally, the Executive Order requires workers to wear a face covering when working outdoors in situations where social distancing cannot be maintained. The Executive Order includes exemptions for people who are unable to wear or tolerate a face covering due to medical or mental health conditions or other reasons. There are also situations in which a face covering may be temporarily removed, such as when eating or drinking, provided that social distancing is maintained between members of different parties. Businesses and venues may choose to have more protective requirements than those in the Executive Order.

For faith community members and participants

Before the service or ceremony

- Stay home if you or anyone in your household is sick or has symptoms: fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle aches, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell.
- Persons who are at higher risk for severe illness (elderly or underlying health conditions) are strongly encouraged to stay home.
- Participants should understand and agree to follow the COVID-19 Preparedness Plans for the facilities where the service or ceremony will take place.

During the service or ceremony

1. Regularly wash or sanitize hands, cover coughs and sneezes, and wear a face covering.
2. Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet between people from different households at all times (entering, exiting, sitting, and any activities during the service).
3. Singing/chanting is a higher risk activity, so congregations are strongly encouraged to wear mask when singing, and or listen to a cantor who maintains distance from other cantors and participants during the service.
4. Avoid touching items often touched by others if possible. Sanitize high-touch items between shared users and between services.
5. Adapt all practices during the services to avoid close contact and maintain social distancing (greetings, collections, sharing of ceremonial objects, communion, etc.).



RED CROSS BLOOD DRIVE

SEPTEMBER 29TH

“Give Blood. Help Save Lives”

An American Red Cross blood drive will be held at St. John's on September 29th from 1:00 PM to 7:00 PM. Please look for more information in the September Voice and at the Missions display in the church Narthex.

Contact Harvey Berg at 651-462-1168 if you would like more information about this upcoming blood drive.

Viking Vittles

Summer Distribution

Started June 10th



When: Wednesday 3– 6 PM (or until gone)

Where:

- * Trinity Lutheran Church
- * Countryside Mobile Home Park
- * Stacy Lions Park

Just stop by one of the above locations and pick up bags of food for your children.

For more information on volunteering or donating, please contact Harvey Berg.

- We are excited to announce that Nakesha (Nikki) Lopez has accepted the position as director and teacher. Nikki joined us last year and did a wonderful job with the students and parents. She comes with years of experience of teaching and DHS licensing. Please help us welcome her to our team.
- We are planning on opening LAP on September 8th for the first day of school. And are excited to announce that we are **FULL** for the 20-21 school year. Any new registrations are asked to contact the director and will be put on a waiting list.
- Nikki is currently working with the school board on a Covid-19 plan for the fall. We are making changes to meet the Covid-19 requirements and will have a plan in place by August 1st.
- We want to thank Bethany Hardy for all her hard work and dedication as our chairperson. We wish her well in her new adventures. With that, Lisa Loso was voted as the new Chairperson and Treasurer. Cindy Johnson is now the Vice Chair and Secretary. Linnea Kment is our Public Outreach and Volunteer. Pastor Ben is our Pastoral Support.
- **We are still looking for new members to join the school board. If you are interested, please let us know. You do not need to have an educational background.**



Thank you for your never ending support.

Lisa Loso

LAP Chairperson/Treasurer.

Christian Outreach

Meetings will resume the second Monday of each month starting August 10th, 2020 at 6:00 PM.

August 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
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2 Service 9:00 AM	3	4	5	6	7	8
9 Service 9:00 AM	10 Christian Outreach 6:00 PM	11 LAP Board Meeting 6:30 PM	12	13	14	15
16 Service 9:00 AM	17 Council Meeting 7:00 PM	18	19	20	21	22
23 Service 9:00 AM	24	25	26	27	28	29
30 Service 9:00 AM	31					

Sunday Service

Reminder: MASKS ARE REQUIRED

We are holding Sunday Service at 9:00 AM.

◆ *Announcements*
◆ *Financial Report*
◆ *Council Minutes*
◆ *Pastor's Article*
Inside This Issue:

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St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church .

The Voice of St. John's

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