



## September 2021 Newsletter

### From Our Pastors

When Scripture speaks of endurance, we often think about our individual challenges in life. But in the past 18 months contemporary Christians have gotten a taste of a different kind of endurance – the spiritual strength required to be patient and compassionate through the long collective struggle of this global pandemic.

No two persons have experienced this year in the same way, but all of us have been affected. And all of us are called in the midst of it to love God and love our neighbors with the best that our hearts and minds can muster.

As we enter into fall we hope you will consider how to love your neighbor in a new way. Get vaccinated, if you have not already; volunteer to help deliver Meals on Wheels or build at the Habitat site; consider a new form of service at church, whether counting offering, ushering, serving as assisting minister, or helping on Wednesday afternoons with programming.

Throughout the ELCA we say that September is the time for “God’s Work. Our Hands.” God is still working to reconcile and heal. Let us enter in to that good work. – Pastor Pam Fickenscher and Pastor Jonathan Davis

### Safe Operating Update

The St. John’s Safe Operating Task Force met to recommend protocols for St. John’s members and building users during this time of high community transmission. While the risks for vaccinated persons remain low, we are mindful of families of children who cannot be vaccinated yet, as well as the immunocompromised and those yet unvaccinated. Our recommendations are based on:

1. The CDC’s recommendation that all persons in communities with substantial transmission wear face masks indoors, regardless of vaccination status, in public settings.
2. The Northfield Public Schools requirement that all persons wear face masks in school buildings beginning August 11. We will also be looking to the school district’s protocols in planning activities with children and youth this fall.

#### **Our guidelines at St. John’s will be as follows:**

1. Face masks will be required indoors for worship, when moving about the building, and for any gathering of more than 10 people.
2. If, in a small gathering of 10 or fewer, everyone is vaccinated, and everyone agrees, face masks may be removed during activity that stays within one room. Group members should put masks back on when moving about the building or using the restrooms. Groups should mask if one member expresses the need for caution.
3. If a group is singing, face masks should be worn throughout the time the group is in that room.

4. Adults volunteering with children and youth programming will be required to affirm they are vaccinated.
5. If an activity involves eating and drinking, food should be served by designated persons. Face masks may be removed when a person is seated and eating or drinking.
6. Outdoor activity will not require masks. Groups are encouraged to take advantage of our outdoor spaces, including the Courtyard and the covered entrance to the Commons.

We know that the case counts in Rice County will fluctuate, that it takes some time to make necessary changes, and that it is frustrating to have to remake plans. Thus, we will begin planning changes once case counts have fallen below the threshold for 2 consecutive weeks, or right away if the CDC changes its guidance.

### **Message from the Stewardship Board**

There is so much to be grateful for as we celebrate gathering in person for worship! The familiar surroundings of the worship space has been a balm after the separation and uncertainty of dealing with a pandemic. St. John's has been there for all of us, even if it was at a distance.

While we wrestled with the unknown of living through the pandemic, we were also spectators in the tragedy and violence engulfing our own state last summer. We watch and wait and pray for rain this summer under the increasing unpredictability of climate change.

We've all learned a lot over the last year or so. We are very much like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season, and whose leaves do not wither, and even if the care-taking of our children and youth, our environment, our congregation, and community looked different for a while, St. John's continued to provide measurable (and sometimes, immeasurable) gifts.

In preparation for the fall Stewardship Campaign, the Stewardship Board has been interviewing staff and members of St. John's to find out what this time was like. Surprisingly, we found joy, tucked in with the sadness, the loneliness, the grief. Sometimes the joy was something small and sweet. Sometimes it was something that left us gobsmacked. There are some marvelous stories about how we weathered this time apart that we want to share with you. We hope that the stories that were shared by volunteers and staff will lift your heart and affirm the community of this congregation, Northfield, and people in other places that have experienced the stewardship of St. John's.

If you already pledge your financial support to St. John's, we thank you and urge you to continue your support. We also urge you to consider increasing your existing pledge. If you haven't pledged before, we urge you to consider making a first-time pledge. Writing down a goal helps make it happen! If you haven't volunteered before, we urge you to get involved with the amazing work that happens here at St. John's. Think about what you might like to explore here at St. John's and what might give you joy. Your time and talent have so much value to St. John's.

You'll be hearing more about the vibrant and exciting stewardship opportunities this fall. We'll be celebrating togetherness and we're excited to share more about what's been going on while we've been away!

## St. John's Over the Summer and Into Fall

This past summer, St. John's enjoyed another well-attended outdoor worship service at the lovely Goodtree Farmstead in June, graciously hosted by the Welbaum family. As COVID restrictions for the fully vaccinated began to lift, attendance for worship in the Sanctuary was no longer limited by a set number, and two Sunday service times were made available and open to all. When COVID cases began to increase in our county again, it was decided that we would return to wearing masks, regardless of vaccination status, and Holy Communion would be safest held outdoors, under the canopy. Holy Communion will continue in this manner until the infection rate comes down again, or until the weather becomes inclement. Livestream worship has continued and will remain, and we are so thankful to Dave Zdenek and Mark Gleason for providing this service!

During the past four months, various St. John's groups continued to meet, often outdoors (e.g. Patio Theology), sometimes over Zoom, and other times indoors in small groups for different book or topic discussions, Bible study, service project work, and other fellowship opportunities. One new opportunity included the Worship and Ecology series led by Pastor Pam, which combined a nature-themed book discussion with corresponding field trips to nearby areas. In August, neighbors and friends enjoyed gathering again in our church parking lot



for the Night to Unite picnic. Thanks to all who attended and to the dedicated members and staff who put it together! St. John's also hosted a Northfield Noontime Organ Recital, with Joanne Rodland performing, and on August 25, the Bridge Chamber Orchestra held a concert in our Sanctuary. For service projects, St. John's Women of the ELCA has coordinated donation collections for Lutheran World Relief and for the TORCH program. St. John's is now in the midst of gathering sign-ups for Meals on Wheels delivery drivers, and for volunteers to assist with the Habitat for Humanity Faith Build project; all are wonderful ways St. John's members and friends can get involved with helping those in our community and beyond! – Angie Gehring, Shared Ministry

## From Our Parish Nurse

This summer I have been doing my best to connect with people in our congregation in meaningful ways. Sometimes this is by visiting our more isolated folks at home or by phone. As your Parish Nurse please know I am happy to help you find answers to questions you may have about your own health or that of a loved one. I am also here to help if you or someone you care about needs to talk about making changes in a living situation for health reasons. Please do not hesitate to reach out to me if you need information about resources in our community to help support you in your health and well-being. – Sally Lindell, Parish Nurse

In upcoming news, on **September 28th from 1:00-6:00 p.m. we will be hosting our 7th American Red Cross Blood Drive** since the pandemic started. To donate, please make an appointment at [www.redcrossblood.org](http://www.redcrossblood.org).

## Children's Ministry



In late May, St. John's held a Third Grade Baptism retreat by the Cannon River. Northfield's Clean River Project held a "River Insect Safari" activity where kids captured river insects. The insects can tell us about how clean the river water is in Northfield.

Other children and family activities included the fabulous Bingo, Bubbles, and Root Beer Night in June at the Evenson Farm, and a multi-church outdoor Vacation Bible School in August.

**The St. John's Children's Board is hosting an Outdoor Family Movie Night on Friday,**

**September 17, 7:15 p.m. at the Norrie residence for a showing of the movie, *Luca*.** Bring a blanket or chair to sit on, bug spray, and a face mask. Individually packaged treats provided. We would love to know if your family will be attending, so please email Julie at [children@stjohnsnorthfield.org](mailto:children@stjohnsnorthfield.org) if you plan to come!

- Julie Brehmer, Director of Children's Ministry

## Youth Ministry



In late June/early July a group of St. John's youth and friends went on a wilderness retreat to Camp Amnicon to experience connection with God and each other while camping and canoeing in the beauty of northern Wisconsin. Other youth events included a neighborhood scavenger hunt collecting food for the CAC; packing lunches for the local Key Youth Center; assembling 40 food packages for Feed My Starving Children (enough for 8,640 meals to feed families in need); and enjoying a favorite night-time game of Romans & Christians, hosted by St. John's. We look forward to more fun and service activities this fall!

**Youth Movie Night on Saturday, September 25.** Watch for more details to come in your weekly emails.

- Emmanuel Kaghondi, Director of Ministry with Youth & Families

**Children and Youth Programming for the 2021 School Year is Open!**

**Register Online at**

<https://stjohnsnorthfield.org/congregational-life/registration/>

**September 2021**

## Properties and Grounds Update

The Properties & Grounds Board is pleased by the turnout of volunteers who adopted various garden plots for tending over the summer and fall season - thank you! Recently an attractive new light pole and fixture was refabricated by Vern Koester for the area by door #10, located on the corner of Third and Poplar streets. Beginning in late September/early October, Reinarts Stained Glass will be re-caulking the stained glass windows in the Sanctuary to seal them better. Other church building projects are awaiting proposals.

- Tim Byers, Facility Manager

## Upcoming Fall Events

- **September 18 & 19:** *God's Work. Our Hands. Faith Build Weekend* with ELCA churches and Habitat for Humanity
- **September 19:** Fall Worship Times Resume at 8:30 and 10:45 a.m.; Between Services: Fair Trade Coffee, Tea & Chocolates & Thistle Farms Soaps Sales in the Commons; Packing of Lutheran World Relief School Kits
- **September 22:** Children and Youth Orientation Night
- **September 26:** Fellowship Event
- **September 28:** Red Cross Blood Drive in St. John's Hall
- **September 29:** Wednesday Afterschool Program and Confirmation Classes Resume
- **October 3:** Sunday School and Sunday Youth Gathering Begins

## Deaths

**August 12, 2021**  
*Alvhild "Avy" Sherve*

**August 19, 2021**  
*Dorothy Ostlie*



**Fall Worship Begins Sunday, September 19, at 8:30 and 10:45 a.m.**

### Livestream, Radio, and TV Worship

Beginning September 19 at 8:30 a.m. Livestream can be viewed on our church website home page at [www.StJohnsNorthfield.org](http://www.StJohnsNorthfield.org), as well as heard on the radio at KYMN 95.1 FM/1080 AM and at [www.kymnradio.net](http://www.kymnradio.net). Services can also be viewed on Northfield TV cable channel 187 on Mondays 7:30 p.m., Tuesdays at 12:00 a.m. and 9:00 a.m., Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m., and Fridays 7:00 p.m. Worship from previous Sundays are also linked on St. John's website home page.

**Church Office Hours beginning September 20: Monday-Friday, 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.**

Please check out the church website and calendar, and read the weekly E-Voice news for continued opportunities to get involved in our church and community in the weeks and months ahead!

**September 2021**

"God's work. Our hands." Sunday



Saturday and Sunday  
Sept. 18 and 19, 2021  
Habitat for Humanity  
*Faith Build*  
Days of Service



LUTHERAN  
WORLD RELIEF

TORCH