

# THE SPIRIT OF ST JOHN



## *OUTDOOR SERVICES*

Sunday services at 10:30 am in the parking lot, with communion, continues weather permitting. Bring your chair and join us.

The online messages from the Pastor will also be available.

## HEALTH UPDATE

**FREDA RUTTER** – continues to battle an infection. Please continue to pray that the infection is soon gone so she may have her knee replaced. Tentatively scheduled for September 15

**PRAYERS ARE SO APPRECIATED.**

St John Evangelical Lutheran Church  
Joe Wolf, Pastor

THIS IS A GOOD READ TO HELP US UNDERSTAND THAT THESE TIMES ARE NOT ONLY DIFFICULT FOR US, BUT ALSO PASTORS.

“Well, I guess what I’m trying to say is that I’ve been imagining killing myself,” the pastor said.

I was on a Zoom call recently with 10 pastors across three denominations, when one of the participants shared a struggle with suicidal thoughts in these challenging days. By the time the meeting concluded, four of the 10 had found the courage to admit their own suicidal ideations.



I was the youngest person in the group, so these aren’t young, green pastors. These are veterans who have gone through plenty of difficult things in their time, but today’s intensity and difficulty is unprecedented.

**One pastor shared the heartbreaking story** of going back to church too early and losing a beloved church member to COVID-19. Another shared how congregants were daily emailing him with threats to leave the church if they didn’t reopen immediately — and withholding their tithes until then.

One pastor was fired. Her husband passed away several years ago, leaving her a single mother of two children. Without child care, she was forced to work from home as best she could. Parenting is a full-time job, and parenting two small children alone during a pandemic stretches the metaphor beyond its breaking point. Her church was unhappy with her leadership, sermon quality and lack of a vision during this time of crisis, so they let her go.

Another pastor was forced to lay off half the church’s staff members because so many of the church’s congregants lost their jobs and are unable to give right now.

I know of another pastor who wasn’t in this meeting who after preaching about race one week, a congregant came to the church office and kicked his office door off of its hinges in an attempt to incite the pastor into a fist fight.

One shared that the survey results the congregation took about whether they should return to in-person worship or not resulted in a nearly perfect 50/50 split, with several members writing in the comments section that they would leave if the church (1) didn’t open immediately or (2) attempted to open at all.

**“Leading anxious congregations amidst a pandemic, a hyper-partisan culture, a civil rights movement, and an upcoming election is destroying the lives of our pastors. Literally.”**

**Leading anxious congregations amidst a pandemic**, a hyper-partisan culture, a civil rights movement, and an upcoming election is destroying the lives of our pastors. Literally.

The only thing that surprised me about the confessions made by these four pastors struggling with suicidal ideation was that there were only four admissions. This Zoom call only echoed the reality that I’ve heard other pastor friends across the nation report for months now.

There’s a story in the Old Testament about King Saul being defeated in battle. Instead of waiting on the opposing army to torture and ridicule him before killing him, he chooses to take his own life by falling on his sword.

Well, pastors are already facing ridicule not just from their adversaries but from many of their own congregants. They’re being tortured by their own inability to lead their churches out of a pandemic, out of hyper-partisanship and out of racism.

Falling on their swords is starting to look pretty attractive.

Church always has been a place where people can act foolish with little consequence — where people have the space to act out toward clergy in ways that aren’t safe to do toward their bosses or their spouses. Being a pastor never has been easy, but this is a new level of hell that pastors are living.

**If you’re a congregant reading this, here’s some advice:**

**First, accept the fact that your church is not The Church.** The body of Christ here on earth is not Christ himself. Don’t conflate the two. Churches are fallible organizations full of sinners saved by grace.

**“Those people who are hell-bent on saving the church are ironically the very ones who end up doing her the most harm.”**

In my experience, those people who are hell-bent on saving the church are ironically the very ones who end up doing her the most harm. The person who chooses to love the church just as she is, for this is what Christ does, is the one who is able to grow with her.

So stop comparing your church to the one down the street or the one your kids go to. Accept your church for who she is.

**Second, accept that your pastor is a shepherd, not The Shepherd.** If we’re unable to accept that our pastors are human beings with flaws, that says more about us than it does our pastors.

And stop comparing them to the pastor down the street or on the podcast you listen to. It isn't fair to your pastor, and such comparison incites in us the sin of envy. One of the Ten Commandments teaches us not to covet—and I believe healthy church members will not covet their neighbor's pastor.

**Third, pray for your pastor.** Pray for his or her mental health. Pray for the pastor's family. Pray for the pastor to flourish. Pray for God to give you understanding and patience with your pastor and to show you how to be a source of light and life during this time of death and darkness.

**Fourth, for the next six months, commit to staying and being the best church member you can be.** I've learned that when I get angry emails, I don't need to respond on the same day. I write a response, then I sleep on it. If I still feel like I need to say those things the next day, then I do. But 90% of the time I don't, and I craft an entirely new email.

If you don't like how things are going in your church, that's OK. No one is saying you should, but I am absolutely suggesting that you keep it to yourself until the pandemic is over and then, if you still think it's worth addressing, do so at that time.

It's common for church members to smile to themselves when their pastor does something they like but never reach out with a compliment—and then be quick to speak out when the pastor does something they don't like. That means the only time we hear from some of you is when you are unhappy. It's exhausting, and isn't an honest representation of who you are or your relationship with the church and your pastor. Share the good things, and share them often.

Practice the Christian virtue of being long-suffering, and ride this storm out. Be committed to your church. Be committed to its financial and spiritual success.

**Fifth, advocate for you pastor's mental health.** Ask committees to use emergency funds to pay for your pastor to see a counselor, get a spiritual director or even just get out of town for a bit. Assure your pastor that if she or he needs to take a leave of absence or an extended vacation, they are empowered to do so. Their lives may depend on it.

**If you're a pastor reading this, I have advice for you too:**

**First, get a counselor.** Find a professional outside of your congregation whom you can get real with, and then be brutally honest with that counselor.

**Second, be honest with your primary care physician about anxiety and depression.** You made need to see a psychiatrist, but odds are that your PCP is dealing with a lot of mental health issues right now and may have some wonderful advice for you. And you made need medication in the short term. It's worth it. Your life may be at stake.

**“We are in a pandemic. Reevaluate and recreate realistic expectations.”**

**Third, do less.** Being a pastor right now is killing pastors. That isn't hyperbole or a metaphor. The workload and the mental strain are inhumane and unsustainable. We are in a pandemic. Reevaluate and recreate realistic expectations.

Some things can be delegated to other staff, deacons, committees or lay teams. Other things will need to be dropped for a time. Hopefully your church will understand if you communicate your needs to them, but even if they don't, losing your job is better than losing your life.

**Fourth, practice friendship.** One of the worst things about the pandemic is the isolation. We are in this together, but we are doing it separately. Reach out to your friends and put a weekly or monthly Zoom date on the calendar. Have a drink, cuss, play video games or anything else that brings even a modicum of relief to the internal pressure you're carrying.

Community and intimacy are prescriptions for the spiritual disease of isolation, and you probably cannot get your prescription filled in your congregation right now.

**Fifth, lean on your peers.** No one can support a pastor quite like another pastor. Ask a few trusted peers to be in a small peer group that carries each other's pandemic burdens for the next six months. And then tell them the truth, pray for each other fervently and often, and hold each other accountable for their taking care of mental health. When my other pastor friends ask me if I've made an appointment with my counselor yet, then I feel compelled to do so in a way that I don't otherwise feel.

You may think you don't have any more room to carry anyone else's burden, and that's true, but I'd wager you will find the burden is actually lessened when shared with competent companions who are on the same journey.

*Jakob Topper serves as pastor of NorthHaven Baptist Church in Norman, Okla.*

## **GIRL'S LUNCH BUNCH**

**The "Girls" met on August 10. They will meet again on MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14 AT NOON. BRING A CHAIR AND YOUR LUNCH.**

## **COMMUNITY MEAL MEETING**

**There will be a Community Meal Meeting next on September 10 via Zoom. If you are on the committee please send an email or text to Pastor Wolf regarding a good day and time for you to meet. The first meal will be Friday, September 25.**

## **CONGRATULATIONS TO**

June Shoemaker's grandson, **John Scholl** on being named Scholar Athletic from Hillard Darby Schools.

# CHURCH COUNCIL NOTES

**AUGUST 18, 2020 via ZOOM  
ST JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH  
CHURCH COUNCIL NOTES**

**ATTENDEES: Pastor Joe Wolf, Jay Bartos, Marianne Daily, Andy Gilbert, Robin Gile, Don Hornbeck, Tina Anderson, Jon Leist,  
ABSENT: Monica Long  
GUESTS: Alan Fisher, Gina Meyers, Pastor Sally Padgett, First English Lutheran Church & Capital University**

## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

**Council voted unanimously on the following Executive Committee positions**

PRESIDENT Robin Gile  
VICE PRESIDENT Jay Bartos  
SECRETARY Marianne Daily/Don Hornbeck

Discussion was held on how long the duration should be for these positions. It was decided until the next annual meeting which is usually held in December.

Meeting opened with a presentation by Pastor Padgett who shared with Council First English's 22nd Street Cookies initiative. A program that they are using to work with at-risk kids living on the Near East Side of Columbus. They are seeking assistance from other Lutheran churches all over Franklin County to provide volunteer services and financial support. St John's is asked to join in this effort either by providing a contribution to the program or purchasing or selling the cookie dough to congregants within St John's.

**Council did not make any commitment at this time. More discussion later.**

**GINA MEYERS** - has done some research regarding the meal program for Friday's that Pastor Wolfe is beginning. She has contacted Wanda Mann and secured good information that should help with the organizing of the Friday Meals. More discussion at the Zoom meeting on Thursday.

**JON LEIST** - Trustee Report

FLEAS - Church has been treated three times, hopefully this last one will take care of The Fleas  
BATS - Received a quote of \$95.00 to make an assessment for removal of the bats

**Council gave Jon approval to move forward on this project.**

ROOF REPAIR - Received an estimate from Dura Slate of \$22,900. Discussion was held on how to finance and it was decided that Jon should get an estimated start date from Dura Slate and how much we would have to pay at the beginning. Based on that information a decision would be made as to where the monies should come from.

**UPDATE – Jon received information from Dura Slate that they would need \$3000 to begin. VIA EMAIL COUNCIL GAVE TINA APPROVAL TO ISSUE A CHECK FOR THIS INITIAL PAYMENT. (8/27/2020)**

SEALING OF THE BASEMENT FLOOR - Waiting until all the painting is completed. PAINTING OF THE WHITE RAILS - Don Hornbeck will be taking care of that shortly.

PAINTING OF THE FRONT DOORS- they have been given a base coat. Chuck and Ruby will be working on.

REMOVE MOLD AND MILDEW FROM CONCRETE WALKWAYS - Don Hornbeck will be handling this.

OTHER -Ruby has asked that a handrail be placed at the front door entrance. Jon stated he will take care of that.

**MARIANNE DAILY** - Discussed the idea of doing away with the landline and Internet. Marianne is the only one that uses the Internet. Suggested replacing the landline with a cell phone. Discussed plans from Consumer Cellular that would cost \$15.00.

**ALAN FISHER** stated he had talked with AT&T and the problem with the Internet and phone is the line had been cut. AT&T has fixed.

After some discussion it was decided to keep the landline and Internet with AT&T. The price for this will be reduced to about \$80.

**PASTOR WOLF** - The proposed constitution has been submitted to the Synod. Nothing back yet.

**MARIANNE DAILY** - Roles, responsibilities, duties of the officers and by laws and committees. Marianne will form a working committee to work on these and submit to Council when completed.

**JAY BARTOS** - Discussion on the purpose of the MEM funds available.

**PASTOR WOLF** - \$500. Art Class Sketchbooks for K-2. Project assistance requested by Tamasha Tennett for BC kids. Tina indicated that she would need a receipt for any money donated via the church. Pastor Wolf will ask for a receipt.

WEEKLY TAKE OUT MEAL - Pastor will be holding a ZOOM meeting with volunteers on Thursday.

LEOLA'S 100TH birthday -Robin Gile will coordinate this. Suggested 100 flowers and a cake be presented to her and hold a drive by for people to wish her a happy birthday.

**TINA ANDERSON** - emailed a month-to-month report to each council member. They should review and let her know of any questions.

**NEXT COUNCIL MEETING - will be Tuesday, September 15, 2020**

Respectfully submitted Marianne Daily

## CHURCH COUNCIL

### MEMBERS OF CHURCH COUNCIL

JAY BARTOS, VICE PRESIDENT  
ROBIN GILE, PRESIDENT

MARIANNE DAILY, SECRETARY  
DON HORNBECK, SECRETARY

ANDY GILBERT  
MONICA LONG



**Steve Acton**      **Lynn Baumbusch**  
**Dolores Behrens**   **Leola Creiglow**  
**Nancy Fogle**      **Linda Leist**  
**Sue Loy**            **Patty Myers**  
**Mike Padgett**      **Eric Preskar**  
**Freda Rutter**      **Clint Stickdorn**  
**Diane Swartz**

**PRAY FOR A CALM TO COME OVER OUR NATION AND FOR ALL MEDICAL STAFF INCLUDING OUR OWN TINA ANDERSON, AMY ANDERSON, KALEE ANDERSON GIBSON, HALEY KNICLEY AND KARMA WISECARVER. ALSO PRAY FOR FARMERS, TRUCKERS, FIRST RESPONDERS, TEACHERS, STUDENTS**



1	CHARLOTTE MEYER
2	BILL MEYER
4	SHARI SMITH
5	BETH MARTIN
6	DANIELLE BARTOS
9	JAN WISECARVER
15	MICHELLE JANEY
19	DENNIS JANEY
20	SHIRLEY WEST
23	LEOLA CRAIGLOW
26	AUSTIN WEST
28	BRADY WEST

**YOUR CONTINUED GIVING IS MUCH APPRECIATED AND NEEDED TO CONTINUE THE MESSAGE OF ST JOHN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH. YOU MAY PLACE YOUR OFFERING IN THE BASKET AT SUNDAY SERVICES, OR SEND A CHECK TO:**

**St John Lutheran Church  
 PO Box 206  
 Lithopolis, OH 43136**

**DEADLINE FOR THE OCTOBER SPIRIT IS SEPTEMBER 20**



**THERE ARE MANY OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU TO PARTICIPATE IN THE HAPPENINGS OF ST JOHN'S. HERE ARE A FEW.**

**FRIDAY MEAL PREPARATION** – Volunteer to assist with this program of preparing meals for those less fortunate. During this pandemic time there are many people that are out of work and unable to provide adequately for their family. If you would like to help with this program please contact Pastor Wolf. 614-738-3356 or via E-mail [wolfieproductions0728@gmail.com](mailto:wolfieproductions0728@gmail.com)

**EUCCHARISTIC MINISTRY** With so many in the congregation not attending services due to covid and feel many of them might be interested in receiving communion. It may be difficult for the Pastor to visit each one on a regular basis, so if you would be interested in participating in training to become a lay eucharistic minister, **please send an email to [office.stjohnlithopolis@gmail.com](mailto:office.stjohnlithopolis@gmail.com) or call the church at 614-837-2947.** Pastor Wolf would provide a Zoom training class.

There are always projects around the church that need tending to. If you can volunteer some time to help, please contact **Jon Leist at 614-837-6248.**

**FOOD PANTRY** – Can always use help, both in donations and physical help. Earnie Conant is our contact for the pantry. If you can volunteer please call **Earnie at 614-562-2443.**

**Loving God, we come to you full of anxiety about what may happen in the coming days and weeks. Shower us with the peace Jesus promised to his disciples, and make us into steady pillars for those around us. In this time of uncertainty and epidemic, wake us up to the reminder that we are not alone.**

**Even as we are asked to keep our distance from others, help us to find ways to reach out to those who need our support. We pray especially for those whose incomes and livelihoods are threatened. For the children who will miss meals due to school closures. For those already isolated, lonely and scared. Loving God, give them your peace, and through our hands ensure they have what they need.**

**Sustain, strengthen and protect all caregivers. Bless them as they offer compassionate care and show selfless courage in the face of risk.**

**Remind us, each time we wash our hands, that in our baptism you call us to let go of our fears and live in joy, peace, and hope. Amen.**

# September 2020

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b> <b>OUTDOOR</b> <b>CHURCH 10:30</b> <b>AM</b> <b>COMMUNION</b>	<b>7</b> <b>LABOR DAY</b>	<b>8</b> <b>6:30 PM</b> <b>WORKING</b> <b>GROUP FOR</b> <b>COMMITTEES</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> <b>FAMILY</b> <b>MEAL</b> <b>COMMITTEE</b> <b>ZOOM 2:00 PM</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b> <b>OUTDOOR</b> <b>CHURCH 10:30</b> <b>AM</b> <b>COMMUNION</b>	<b>14</b> <b>GIRL'S</b> <b>LUNCH</b> <b>BUNCH 12:00</b>	<b>15</b> <b>COUNCIL</b> <b>6:30 PM</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>20</b> <b>OUTDOOR</b> <b>CHURCH 10:30</b> <b>AM</b> <b>COMMUNION</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b> <b>AUTUMN</b> <b>BEGINS</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b> <b>FAMILY</b> <b>COMMUNITY</b> <b>MEAL</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b> <b>OUTDOOR</b> <b>CHURCH 10:30</b> <b>AM</b> <b>COMMUNION</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>			

**St. John Lutheran Church  
133 W. South Street  
P.O. Box 206  
Lithopolis, OH 43136**

**Church Office: 614-837-2947  
E-Mail: [office.stjohnlithopolis@gmail.com](mailto:office.stjohnlithopolis@gmail.com)  
<https://www.stjlithopolis.com/>**



**Vision Statement**

“To embrace the gift of who we are as God’s people in this  
community and move out into the world to live as  
Good News proclaimers and doers.