



# *THE EVANGELIST*

**MAGAZINE FOR ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**  
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### ON THE COVER:

The harvest from Rector Jered Weber-Johnson's garden .

*"Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce."*

*Jeremiah 29:4-5*

### NEXT DEADLINE

for the November/December Issue:

**October 16**

Everyone is *encouraged* to submit reflections or to suggest ideas for articles. Please email [church@stjohnsstpaul.org](mailto:church@stjohnsstpaul.org) before the deadline shown. Thank you!

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# FROM THE REVEREND JERED WEBER-JOHNSON



Dear People of God at St. John the Evangelist,

*"Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce."  
Jeremiah 29:4-5*

There is something about this present moment that feels like exile. In his recent article for the Presbyterian Outlook, renowned preacher and scholar Tom Long described this pandemic and its effect on the church in exilic terms, referencing the somber poetry of Psalm 137, "[b]y the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and ...wept when we remembered Zion." For Long, as for many of us, there are sad resonances between the experience of the people of God in exile and this long absence from our houses of worship, the sacraments, and from being with one another in the flesh. He writes:

*Coronavirus may not be King  
Nebuchadnezzar, but it has taken us from our  
temples, sanctuaries and sacred places,  
cruelly stolen the lives of our elderly and our  
children, isolated us from each other and kept  
us captive and fearful in our dwellings.  
"Let's see if you can keep singing those songs  
of Zion, now," it seems to sneer.*

The Israelites were taken captive by the Babylonians for years, decades even, and stolen from all they knew and held dear. Lives and livelihoods were lost. Culture and religion were threatened with erasure. As biblical scholar Wil Gafney describes,

*Most Western readers will not be able to  
identify with the originating context of  
Jeremiah's epistle. Some readers - African  
Americans descended from abducted  
Africans, Native Americans living on  
reservations distant from their ancestral  
lands - may identify strongly with the exilic  
context.*

If this is true, we might look to these experiences of long suffering and the trials of true and lasting exile for indicators on how we might survive in this our own shorter yet sustained period of forced absence. I read the poetry of Lucille Clifton as one such example of resilience, in her descriptions of the

beauty and strength of survival from the African diaspora. She writes,  
*won't you celebrate with me - what i  
have shaped into - a kind of life? i had  
no model. - born in babylon - both  
nonwhite and woman - what did i see to be except  
myself? - ...come celebrate - with me that  
everyday - something has tried to kill me - and  
has failed.*

Exilic peoples give us beautiful if painful witness to what endurance through long suffering looks like. We must celebrate that we are still alive and rejoice that we have made it through whatever life has brought our way, from the pain of loss, the exile from our houses of worship, the ugliness of our national political life, the loneliness of separation from community. We have come through all of this so far. So, raise a glass, cook a meal, light the candles, sing songs. These are all things we can still do. We are still here. Let us celebrate.

So too, the words of the prophet Jeremiah, with which I opened this article, give us clues and indicators of what God bids the Israelites do in their long exile in Babylon. The prophet exhorts the people to build homes and plant gardens. In short, in exile, the people were called to settle in, to make themselves at home, to plant seeds that would only bear fruit in time. I confess that it is hard for me (and maybe for you too), at this moment, to settle in. It is hard to accept that we are unable to gather for worship. It is much easier to live in denial or to resort to magical thinking - but, this pandemic frustrates our plans and desires for gathering, it prevents us from safely being with one another. We cannot, and should not, come together for worship, especially when to do so would be to offer the sacrament to the healthy and the able while excluding the vulnerable. So settle in we must, not as those resigned to an unfortunate fate, but as those who are willing to carve out the space necessary to live, as those who look forward to a hopeful future.

This summer I planted a garden, a place where I go when I need a break and some respite from the stresses of life or ministry. I planted seeds in hopes of feeding my family, but I found something deeper and richer than that, something like coming home to myself. Wendell Berry says that perhaps the most important thing a garden gives us is ourselves, our

own bodies. He writes, "A garden gives the body the dignity of working in its own support. It is a way of rejoining the human race." Which isn't to say I've been hard at work toiling my plot of earth all summer. Rather, I have been attentive to that ground and to myself in relationship with it. I have had to pause, to listen, to consider, and to have patience with the soil and myself, when I mess up or when life in the garden doesn't respond the way I wish it would. And when I am there, hose in hand, or stooped over the weeds, or scouring between the vines for a cucumber, I am truly and fully there. I am nothing more or less than human. Which is to say I am me; and I can only be me in connection with others. The food I raise and place on the table becomes, in a way, a sacrament. It expresses outwardly what is true inwardly, that we depend upon and are intimately connected to each other, in our bodies, in and through the soil. So, plant a garden, settle in, be here, find the places of connection, come back to your

body and remember your deep need for and connection to one another. Then, fortified by this memory, reach out to be in relationship and solidarity with others who, like you, are craving human connection and sustenance.

Jeremiah also reminds us that God is with us, always, and everywhere, in good times and bad, in exile and at home. Our God goes with us and walks alongside us through it all. He says,

*For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me... and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations ...and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.*

So often used to comfort individuals going through a tough season of life, this text, read in full, more accurately reminds us that God's promises are to a people, going through a collective experience of deep suffering. If that

promise holds any hope for us, I believe it is as a people, united in our collective yearning for restoration, grieving all that we have lost in this season, and hoping for a return to life and community together. Indeed, as we return from exile to the places we have called our spiritual home, we will return with a new sense of humility, and, alert to how God is alive and active in our lives as a church, ready to encounter the living God in the flesh, in our worship, and in the gathered assembly. As you will find in this issue of the Evangelist, there is much we can do, even now, in our worship and life as a community dispersed though we are, to be the people of God, to celebrate life and persistence, to grow and learn together, and plant seeds now for the future when God calls us to return.

Yours in yearning and hope,

## STEWARDSHIP: JOY AND REJOICE!

by Sarah Dull

After our June and July study of Job, I needed to hear Paul's joy and rejoicing in his letter to the Philippians. Every time I read Paul's letter I am awed that he probably wrote it while imprisoned. At a time of great hardship and uncertainty Paul writes a letter full of joy. He describes the joys of following Christ and persevering for the gospel, he rejoices in his ministry and relationship with the Philippians, and he urges them to find joy and rejoice.

On this reading, one passage

particularly captured me, 4:10-14:

*I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress.*

Note, Paul's rejoicing is not in the support the Philippians are providing him. Paul's joy is in The Lord. It is as if everything else rests in God, not in ourselves, or each other, but in God. Paul expresses a deep-seated joy, confident in The Lord and His work in our lives.

Also notice, the first gift Paul gives thanks for, is the Philippian's "revived concern" for him. Paul likewise closes this passage with thanks for their empathy. What is the real gift when someone drops off homemade pie or calls unexpectedly to say hello? How important is it to be seen and cared for amid

loneliness and suffering? The gifts of connection and understanding are primary in Paul's joy. ([Check out this fun clip on empathy from Brene Brown](#)).

Paul notes the Philippians had "no opportunity to show" their concern. Do we allow others the opportunity to express their spirit driven care and compassion? How disheartening is it to be denied the chance to help those in need?

Furthermore, Paul shares his secret of being content whatever his situation. The critical issue is not his circumstance, but where Paul puts his focus – on "Him who strengthens me." The contentment Paul describes is not stoic resignation. Paul's contentment is joyful trust in God, who watches over us in lack or abundance.

Paul's contentment reminds me of Andy Wimmer in the 2011 documentary Happy. [Click here](#) to watch Wimmer describe the deep meaning and joy he found leaving a successful career and comfortable life to work in Mother Teresa's Home for the Dying Destitutes in Calcutta.

As I reflect on this passage the pandemic drags on, the economy continues to decline, and most people I speak to are exhausted. And yet *I rejoice in the Lord greatly!* So many of you have found opportunities to use your various God-given gifts to express your concern for others. So far this year:

- You donated almost \$9,000 to the Rectors Discretionary fund for clergy to respond to need in our community.
- Nearly 20 volunteers are operating our Farmer's Market, helping the farmers make a living and neighbors gather safely.
- St. John's raised over \$12,000 - double our goal - to expand our buyback program, providing fresh produce to an increasing number of hungry.
- Additionally, we gave nearly \$2,000 to local food shelves.
- Over 30 members are calling fellow parishioners offering connection and care.
- We sent more than \$8,000 to St. John's Health Clinic in Kayoro, Uganda, continuing vital support for our sister community.
- Hundreds of masks were made and donated by St. John's members.
- St. John's gave almost \$7,000 to support families transitioning out of homelessness.
- We were overwhelmed with donations for our annual School Tools drive (see picture).
- Dozens of parishioners shared their time, their talent, their stories, and their music to enrich our formation and worship, help us find meaning, and

ease our souls during this time.

As Paul teaches, it is not primarily about money or service but the hope and reassurance acts of giving inspire. Knowing that you are seen and cared for, not forgotten, is probably the biggest gift of all.

Yet, our rejoicing is in The Lord and the work He is doing in our lives and our community. Whatever our circumstance, our focus, our trust, our joy is in God. I love that our mission statement is centered in God:

*Gracious God: By your love you have called us to proclaim with joy the good news of your son: So build us up in the knowledge and love of Him that we may welcome all people into this community of faith, and show forth our service to you in our service to others; through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Amen.*

Maybe Paul would tell us it is this joyful confidence in God that maintains our church and its mission, in good times and in bad. And I am certain Paul would tell us, in need or in plenty, contentment is possible through God. If you find yourself in want, rejoice in The Lord. He has called you to a community that is concerned for you and shares your distress. A community that, given the opportunity, will care and support you. Paul's joy seems to transcend circumstances, cares deeply for the hurting, and trusts God's sovereignty in daily experiences. Maybe the biggest lesson we can learn from Paul is to lean on our trust in Christ, to be people of contagious joy!

If you would like to explore theological, spiritual, and practical resources to help us joyfully navigate a material world, join us for A Wonder-Full Life: Integrating Money and Meaning. [Click here for more information](#).

I leave you with the Chicago Symphony under Riccardo Muti and Beethoven's jubilant 9th Symphony which was inspired by Friedrich Schiller's poem Ode to Joy. [Click here to listen and rejoice!](#)



# REFLECTION: MARGARET'S TIME AT ST. JOHN'S

by Margaret Thor

"We give you thanks, O God, we give you thanks..." It is with this portion of Psalm 75 in mind and with a grateful heart that I offer this reflection of my time at St John the Evangelist. When I was initially assigned to SJE, Jered and I were both in agreement that I would not stay longer than 5 years. Because of my role on the Bishop Search committee, I stayed on an additional year and will conclude 6 years with this wonderful and vibrant faith community.

I was a brand new deacon when I began my ministry at St. John's. Although I grew up in the Episcopal church and had been active member both as a youth and an adult, I didn't feel prepared to be a deacon. Fortunately you all took me under your wings and allowed me to grow into my calling to serve you and the world.

Through you I've grown in my faith, my calling, and my skills as a leader. I am grateful for the ministries of SJE supported by all of you. I am pleased to see the engagement and growth in the area of faith in action, a particular love of mine. I enjoyed serving side by side with you at First Nations Kitchen, the farmers' market, in Kayoro, and in gathering food and school tools for those in need. I spent many nights with you during the several months of February hosting families through Project Home. I listened with compassion and admiration of the relational work of the mentors in our Hearts to Homes program. During those activities I heard many stories, learned more about your faith, my faith, and the faith of others.

And I spent lots of time with the youth. Hanging out with the youth filled me with confidence for the future of our world. They are intelligent, passionate, articulate, and just plain fun. One of my fondest memories is the pilgrimage we made to Ireland. It was a time for learning about ourselves and each other. It was a time of enjoying God's creation, it was a time to work together. Through them, I witnessed what Jesus instructed us, to love one another. I suspect what I truly became aware of during my time at St John's is that "it takes a village...". I am grateful for the ministries of those

servicing on the Altar Guild, as acolytes, lay readers, and vergers. I am grateful for the music and the choir - and especially grateful to the sopranos who managed to sing over my out of tune voice. I am grateful for the ushers, greeters, and the invite, welcome and connect team. I am grateful for the new members ministry. I am grateful for the many that work behind the scenes on the building committee. I am grateful for all the volunteers not only those who participated in faith in action activities but in all ministries in the church. I'm grateful for those who attended St John's and allowed me to help you be the church in the world.

I am especially grateful for the staff who lifted me up, guided me, encouraged me, pushed me, and just let me do my thing. It is hard to say farewell to all of you. You are an important part of who I am as a deacon. Thank you.



The Rev'd  
Margaret Thor  
Deacon,  
St. John's  
2014-2020

[Watch our goodbye & gratitude video here!](#)

# REFLECTIONS FROM A DIGITAL CHAPEL

by Jayan Koshy

*“Dearly beloved, we have come together in the presence of Almighty God our heavenly Father...”*

On most mornings, these words from the longer of the two openings of Morning Prayer feel sharp in my mouth as I say them. When I originally pitched the idea of holding daily Morning Prayer at St. John’s, my vision had been of parishioners gathering in the Chapel of the Beloved Disciple each morning to lift up our voices together in unison in that beautiful space. And we enjoyed that, for a while, in the “before times.” So addressing that opening sentence to a camera for a livestream is a regular, painful reminder that all is not right.

Granted, I could opt for the shorter introduction that doesn’t highlight the physical company I miss so much. But I choose not to. I keep opening each morning with that paragraph that reminds me how much I miss kneeling “with penitent and obedient hearts” alongside my siblings in Christ. And I do this, not out of some masochistic drive to make the pandemic harder than it has to be, but because alongside the poignant reminders of distance, that paragraph reminds me why I open the day with Morning Prayer at all.

If you aren’t familiar with these few sentences, I’d encourage you to break out your prayer book and turn to page 79. But in brief, the introduction goes on to reiterate the purpose of Morning Prayer: to praise God, to hear the Word of the Lord, and to pray for the needs of the world. I read the “long” introduction to remind myself (and anyone listening) that what we’re embarking on for the next 30 minutes or so is bigger than the physical community I miss so much. It is what the Benedictine’s call the opus Dei—the Work of God. It is the work of the Church as a “royal priesthood,” praising

God and interceding on the behalf of the world.

When we switched to streaming Morning Prayer over Facebook, I needed (and honestly still need) that reminder in the introduction that this work doesn’t go away or become unimportant when we can’t gather in person. God is still calling his people to praise him and pray for the world. And although it was hard to believe in the early weeks of streaming, when God issues a call he is also faithful to assemble and equip us to answer it. If we are called to do something together, God will bring us together to do it.

This, at least, has been the way I’ve been delighted to see Morning Prayer develop over the last 6 months. As days and weeks have turned into months, God has raised up a new sort of community around this opus Dei. Prayers and love are shared among a small but growing group in the comments. Our Zoom calls afterwards are just as full with banter as they are with serious discussion of the Scripture and the world. New members have joined St. John’s through these gatherings.

Although the opening sentences continue to make my heart ache for the chapel, the laughter, and the tackle-hugs from regularly attending children, they have also become a source of comfort. The work is still there. God is still calling us to praise him and pray for the world. And God will raise up communities to do that work. He already is. It just doesn’t look like we’d expected it to.

**Morning Prayer:**  
Monday through Saturday at 8am  
on [Facebook](#) followed by Coffee Hour  
on [Zoom](#).

# THE ANTICIPATION IS KILLING ME

by Katie Madsen

Pandemic and pregnancy.....two things I never thought I would be writing about let alone in tandem. In many ways the way in which these two significant periods in life are playing out side by side couldn't be more serendipitous. With just about 10 weeks to go the anticipation of welcoming our first child into the world is beyond exciting, terrifying and taking FOREVER!

These are the same emotions I have had in varying waves throughout this pandemic. Terrifying is just about the perfect word to describe the state of my emotions almost every day for the last 30 weeks, with a plethora of questions that run through my head on a daily basis. Many of these questions revolve around the idea of bringing another life into



this world, this world that seems to be filled with everything I would ever want to protect my child from – fear, anger, fire, flood. Not to mention all of the evils of this world I want to raise them to stand up against – racism, sexism, xenophobia. The fear is real

in our house as John and I talk about the values we want to raise our child with, and how we are going to do it. Many of our friends are in the same boat, as we look at the faces of the little ones with whom our child will play. We are a village, and can't do it alone. After a time, we must look beyond what scares us and look to the hope and excitement that comes from facing our fears head on.

Excitement makes sense for the baby but excitement in a pandemic...I must be crazy. In fact, I think if I truly look around, past the suffering, loss

and fear I am excited; excited for what is to come. Spring has long been my favorite season. There is new life everywhere. A chance to plant, grow and create things that weren't there just a few months ago. This is where motherhood and pandemic seem to collide for me in a very unexpected way. I am bringing a new life into the world to raise. A new life, full of possibility and promise, a chance to throw out the old and bring in the new; the same way the pandemic has created this amazing opportunity for us to dig deep and rethink the ways in which we had been living our lives, to readjust our values and priorities. We had lost sight of what it meant to be the hands and feet of Christ in the world, we got complacent, settled and unwilling to roll our sleeves up and do the work. That, for me, is the exciting part of parenthood and the pandemic. A real and true chance to be/raise the change I want to see in the world (to rephrase Gandhi).

The waiting for me is torture. I would say that patience is one of my poorest qualities. I am ready to hold, snuggle and love on this little one. On a daily basis I find it difficult not to think about how much I already love this tiny being and how desperate I am to see who this person is. In so many ways this is also exactly how I feel about not being together as a community right now. I have been through the cycles of fear, excitement and anticipation (sometimes daily). In the end, all I want is a healthy and happy baby, just as I want a healthy and happy community here at St. Johns.

We will gather at the table together again. Just as I will hold this little one. Though the fear, excitement and anticipation are the only things many of us can see in this moment, I have faith that if we are patient we will see the promised land again soon.



# MADE FOR THESE TIMES: THE COMFORT OF PETS

by the Rev. Barbara Mraz

*"But ask the animals and they will teach you,  
or the birds in the sky and they will show you;  
or speak to the earth and it will teach you,  
or let the fish in the sea inform you....  
In his hand is the life of every creature  
and breath of all mankind." Job 12: 7-10*

*Who's a good boy?*

*Are you a good boy?*

*Are you the best doggie in the whole world?*

*Yes you are yes you are!*

The slobbery greetings, the good-natured snuggles, the adoring looks – many of us are utterly in love with our pets, beings who are perhaps made for these times of isolation as we spend more time with them and they have more opportunities to give us their amazing gifts.

Yes, I am also talking about cats.

Seventy percent of American homes have a pet and it's clear why. Besides the obvious comfort pets offer us – companionship, unconditional love, entertainment, diversion -- there are other things which our fur babies bring us.

For those of us who live alone, they bring us a warm body and a beating heart to be with us in the dark hours: "I don't know what I'd do without my cat during this time," several people have told me. They are a physical presence; something living to touch and look in the eyes.

It's a privilege to have a relationship with another species. They let us into their world and come into ours with trust and love. They are dependent on us for the basics of life and we on them for what they give us.

Pets allow us to project things on to them: identities and sometimes a whole life story. A friend has created a whole biography for my cat **Finley**: she is an online student at Miss Porter's School for Girls; her best friend is a privileged white cat named **Muffy**; she is a Republican because she says she likes the good life including gourmet cat food.

Sometimes pets can be a voice for children:

"**Dolly's** sad because she doesn't think I should have to go to the dentist" Or they can be a steady presence on the bed when someone is sick. Because they live shorter lives than humans, pets show us the whole arc of life. Most don't fight aging and get older with dignity and utter dependence on us to care for them. The owner of **Taffy**, a Goldendoodle, writes, "She still chases the ball when it's thrown despite her arthritic legs and is a good sport about sharing her space with a young pup."

Simon writing about his Goldendoodles: "They are a bank of affection. You can freely deposit affection to them and they return it whenever it is needed. They provide a constant or a 'normal' unchanged thing during the pandemic."

Lea Anne: "Our dear Goldendoodles, **Taffy** (11) and **Rufus** (10 months) are a constant source of love and comic relief. Without fail they cut through the monotony, worry, and stress of this pandemic each and every day. Rufus brings joy to our house. He will spontaneously jump onto the trampoline and run crazily in circles, producing smiles and laughter on an otherwise dull summer afternoon as we 'shelter in place' for yet another day."

Otto: "Having **Mark** in our lives keeps us grounded and sane. He gives our life perspective. He doesn't know or care about Covid, he just wants to be with us. And, that is enough."

Jered and Erin: "In this pandemic, it is easy in our isolation to turn inward to our own needs and desires, to our own inner narratives. Yet, **Chester** is always calling us out of ourselves, to go for a walk, to fill his food bowl, to scratch his ears, and to gently remind him how loved and at home he truly is. His presence is large in our lives, and just as he gives big love, he is calling forth big love from us in return. He's a fantastic addition to our little family and we love him in all his goofy, fluffy, sweetness."

And when we lose them, it can be shattering. Sometimes we have to give them the gift of stopping their suffering. The mourning can last a very long time.

Someone told me, "When I get to heaven, unless I'm welcomed by at least three Golden Retrievers, I'm going to be really disappointed."

Me, too.

# LEAD ME OH LORD, LEAD ME: TO THE POLLS

by Jamie Bents and Jenny Koops

Without a doubt we all know the November election is coming; we've seen the yard signs, gotten texts, emails, and phone calls asking us to donate to candidates for a variety of offices, and probably seen at least one of the outlandish campaign attack ads on TV. So what is our role as people of faith in elections? Below we hope you will find not only stories from fellow Parishioners Jenny Koops and Jamie Bents on what energizes them to encourage others to #Votefaithfully but also practical help for voting in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

**What is an experience for you that really made you understand the power of voting or the power you hold as an individual voter?**

*Jamie:* In the 2016 election, the presidential race was so close that Michigan was won by only 10,704 votes. Michigan has 4,810 voting precincts, which averages to TWO VOTES per precinct as the deciding factor. Two votes per precinct! That difference is you talking to the neighbors on either side of your home about voting and making a plan to vote.

*Jenny:* I was in Amsterdam for a J-term studying the anthropology of the church there and we had a guest speaker come and talk to our class about the complex nuances of sex work in the Netherlands. One keypoint she made was that having a passport and the ability to freely move around as a major influence in that line of work; she pointed out just how much power and privilege all of us [American students] had just by having a passport. The speaker really challenged us to steward the power of our passport well, voting is one way I try to do that.

**What in your faith impacts your viewpoint on voting?**

*Jamie:* To me, voting is all about our Greatest Hits - The Great Commandment, loving God with all my heart, soul, and mind, loving my neighbor as myself, and doing unto others as I would have them do unto me. My faith cares for others and the

Earth, and it believes that we can all do better (when we all do better!). It leads me to vote towards help, care, and justice, because I am no better than anyone else and everyone should have what they need to survive and thrive.

*Jenny:* I think exactly what drew me to the Episcopal church in the first place, our Baptismal Covenant. Is the person I'm voting for seeking to serve Christ in all persons? Am I renouncing evil with my vote? Is the candidate I'm voting for striving for justice and peace? I also have to think about what scripture calls us to: feeding the hungry, clothing the poor, does my vote help make sure that happens for all of my neighbors?

**Why is my parish reminding me to vote? Isn't that a violation of the separation between church and state?**

You should take a peek at the sermon from the Rev. Barbara Mraz's from August 18, 2019: A Nun, a Bishop, and a Sinner: [Link to Barbara's Sermon](#). Voting is your civic duty - this article contains no directives on how or who you should vote for.

**But we are trying to stay home and away from crowds. How am I supposed to vote? I heard that voting by mail can lead to fraud. Isn't absentee voting safer? Can I drop off my ballot?**

Every citizen must have access to safe and equitable voting. Given the current pandemic many people are unable to vote safely, or wish to stay home to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Even if you are able to vote in person, not everyone can. Ensuring that everyone has the ability to vote safely is caring for our neighbor! We can adjust our expectations to support others.

Multiple options exist to help ensure that all of us are able to vote:

- Voting by mail is absentee voting. It's legal. In Minnesota anyone can vote by mail. While you may have heard that voting by mail increases fraudulent voting this isn't supported by available data. Among five states with available data, rates of voter fraud between 2016 and 2018 were 0.0025%.<sup>1</sup>
- Please note: due to COVID, the state's

requirement that voters get a notary or witness to sign their ballot envelope was eliminated. <sup>2</sup>

- Vote by actual mail - drop your completed absentee ballot in a mailbox, leave your ballot in your mailbox for your friendly neighborhood postal worker to pick up and deliver for you, or take your ballot to your local election office. Some accept ballots curbside. <sup>3</sup>
- Drop off your absentee ballot to your county election office. Check your county election office's webpage to verify the deadline.
- Vote early in person with an absentee ballot: You can vote early with an absentee ballot at your local elections office. If you are not registered, you can do so in person if you show proof of residence. [Vote early in person](#)
- Absentee ballots will be counted if they are postmarked on or before Election Day and received by 8 p.m. within one week of Election Day.

(You can track the status of your ballot at the MN Secretary of State office! [https://](https://mnvotes.sos.state.mn.us/AbsenteeBallotStatus.aspx)

[mnvotes.sos.state.mn.us/AbsenteeBallotStatus.aspx](https://mnvotes.sos.state.mn.us/AbsenteeBallotStatus.aspx))



**Would you like a sticker?  
Reach out to Jamie or Jenny and  
they would be happy to send you one!**

### **I always vote in person. How can I do that safely?**

- Vote early in person! In Minnesota you can vote early in person at your local county election office from September 18 - November 2.
- All Minnesota polling places will have supplies to reduce COVID-19 spread, including masks and hand sanitizer for voters. Sanitizing procedures from the CDC will be followed. <sup>4</sup> Polling places will also respect social distancing guidelines. Bring a mask and wear it! Bring snacks and water in case lines are long.
- Check your polling place prior to Election Day. Polling places change! <https://pollfinder.sos.state.mn.us>

Tuesday, November 3 will be here soon! Make a plan to vote today. If you would like to get involved with further initiatives to 'Get Out The Vote' (GOTV) feel free to contact Jamie Bents ([jtbents@gmail.com](mailto:jtbents@gmail.com)) or Jenny Koops ([jenny.koops@gmail.com](mailto:jenny.koops@gmail.com))!

## **Reference Links**

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/minuscule-number-of-potentially-fraudulent-ballots-in-states-with-universal-mail-voting-undercuts-trump-claims-about-election-risks/2020/06/08/1e78aa26-a5c5-11ea-bb20-ebf0921f3bbd\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/minuscule-number-of-potentially-fraudulent-ballots-in-states-with-universal-mail-voting-undercuts-trump-claims-about-election-risks/2020/06/08/1e78aa26-a5c5-11ea-bb20-ebf0921f3bbd_story.html)

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wizmnews.com/2020/08/03/judge-extends-minnesota-vote-by-mail-changes-to-november/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://minnesota.cbslocal.com/2020/08/07/drive-thru-ballot-drop-off-begins-friday-in-minneapolis/>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2020/07/31/minnesotas-primary-election-pandemic-edition-how-to-vote-safely-inperson>

# SERVICE INFORMATION

Most current schedules at <http://stjohnsstpaul.org/worship-music/lay-readers/>

St. John's mission and ministry is more vital now than ever before. **Your financial gifts enable us to continue paying our staff, and ensure the essential ministries of pastoral care, worship, outreach, and community connection continue for all ages.** Please support this effort, as you are able, by continuing to make your pledge payments, or by making an offering. To give online, [click here](#) or text 651-273-0753 with the amount you'd like to give and where you'd like the funds to go; i.e. "\$100 Pledge." Thank you!

## Other Offerings

- **Sung Compline:** Thursdays at 7pm on [Facebook](#).
- **Morning Prayer:** Monday – Saturday at 8am on [Facebook](#).
- **Thursday Book Group:** 10am, 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month on [Zoom](#).
- **Habits of Grace:** Mondays with Presiding Bishop Curry [here](#).

## Readers:

Bob Linehan, Coordinator ([rlinehan@gmail.com](mailto:rlinehan@gmail.com))

**August 2:** Diane Wallace-Reid, Jude Weber-Johnson

**August 9:** Mary Johnson, Sr. Julian Smith-Boyer

**August 16:** Carol DeFrancisco, Mark McInroy

**August 23:** Bob Linehan, Oliver McInroy

**August 30:** Jeff Olsen, Helen Docherty

**September 6:** Colleen Swope, John Docherty

**September 13:** TBD, Jill Thompson

**September 20:** TBD

**September 27:** TBD

(This schedule is subject to change.)

## Sunday Schedule

- **10 am Worship** on [Zoom](#) and [YouTube](#). [Click here](#) for more instructions, including how to call-in, or to view the Liturgy and Propers.
- **11 am - Coffee Hour** on [Zoom](#).

## Happy birthday to...

September		October	
	Olson, Chelsea		Wall, Cecelia
2	Garceau, Sarah	1	Johnson, Tessa
	Thompson, Jill	2	Hodgson, Emily
4	Clary, Samuel		Lightner, Caroline
	Hennessy, Henry	3	Smith, Marschall
	Reeher, Mary	4	Janeczko, Juanita
5	Rutherford, Christa		Rapp, Marjorie
	Smith, Debra	5	Quinn, Aidan
6	Clark, Rachel	7	Gjerde, Amy
7	Clary, Bradley		Paier, Otto
	McMahan, Cheryl		Rosendale, Skyler
8	Hagstrom, Paige	8	Howie, Nora
	Norman, Diane		Thor, Peter
10	Brown, Eli		Vogel, Daniel
11	McCann, Greta	9	Clark, Jay
13	Dailey, Mary		Ebenhoch, Tara
	Olson, Wendy	10	Aldridge, Andrew
	Stenerson, Hanna		Debertin, Julia
14	Ebenhoch, Ava	13	Jungbauer, Scott
	Gjerde, Finn		Nelson, Linda
15	Cook, Jacki	14	Fishel, Terri
	Leonard, Nola	15	Finley, Beverly
16	Snowfield, Barbara		Ryan, Brandi
17	Cooper, Shirley		Watkins, David
	Ebeling, Linda	16	Garceau, Julia
18	Loch, Chelsea		Sullivan, Peter
	19 Scheel, Wade		
	20 Sheffert, Zach		
	21 Berndt, Sylvia		
	Garceau, Michael		
	Magnusson, Gary		
	Parish, Danielle		
	22 Bruce, Devin		
	Gooch, Shirlee		
	Hertz, Lynn		
	Powers, Oliver		
	23 Clary, Benjamin		
	Wellington, David		
	24 Johnson, Annika		
	Johnson, Fredrik		
	Weinkauff, Don		
	25 Kipling, Jane		
	Paquette, Kevin		
	26 Lautenshlager, Gil		
	27 Lawyer, John		
	28 Sullivan, Scott		
	29 Gilbertson, Mary		
	Grundhauser, Emma		
	Johnson, Tracy		
	Thor, Eric		
	30 Sand, Jack		

Have your address or phone number changed? Is your birthday missing or incorrect?

Log on to My St. John's ([Click here](#)) to update your records.