# THE EVANGELIST

MAGAZINE FOR SAINT JOHN THE EVANGELIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH MAY/JUNE 2020 CHURCH OF THE OPEN DOOR SINCE 1881 VOL. CXVI, NO. 3

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## STAY CONNECTED

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#### **ON THE COVER:**

Our Clergy joining in fellowship outside of Saint Johns (prequarantine). Above is a picture of the Saint John's Choir rehearsing via conference call.

#### NEXT DEADLINE

for the July/August Issue: June 10 Everyone is *encouraged* to submit reflections or to suggest ideas for articles. Bring your *piece and/or photos* to the office or email to church@stjohnsstpaul.org *before* the deadline shown. Thank you!

## ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

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The Rev. Jered Weber-Johnson, *Rector* The Rev. Craig Lemming, *Associate Rector* The Rev. Margaret Thor, *Deacon* 

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## FROM THE REVEREND JERED WEBER-JOHNSON



In our April Men's Gathering, those attending the Zoom call discussed resilience and how to find meaning in the midst of a Pandemic. Our conversation cued off of a New York Times Op-Ed by Emily Esfahani Smith on the same subject. Smith used the work of the eminent existentialist and Holocaust survivor, Viktor Frankl, who believed that resilient people possessed "Tragic Optimism",

or the ability to keep hope alive and find meaning even in life's most painful and grievous experiences. Far from promoting the damaging belief that "everything happens for a reason" or the even more dangerous perspective that suffering ought to be sought out so that we can learn something, it holds that suffering is a given - that we need not seek pain, it will find us soon enough. How true this has been as we've watched COVID-19 wreak damage on a global scale.

While suffering is unavoidable, we can seek to make meaning out of pain and grief. This, says, Smith, is what resilient people do. Study after study bears out the finding that those who seek to make meaning, those who do the work to transform trauma into something good, are



able to cope better, are able to bounce back after the traumatic experience, and report less instances of depression than those who don't. Which isn't to say that resilient individuals are naive or even less stressed than the rest of the population. As Smith writes, they

"...have intensely negative reactions to trauma. They experience despair and stress, and acknowledge the horror of what's happening. But even in the darkest of places, they see glimmers of light, and this ultimately sustains them."

"But", she writes "even more than helping [resilient people] cope, adopting the spirit of tragic optimism enables [them] to actually grow through adversity" (emphasis mine).

Her observation is about resilient individuals, but, as Christians we believe that none of us exists in isolation. Our body is a collective of each baptized member, bound and connected through the Resurrected body of Jesus, and alive in the



world. Which has me wondering, do her findings apply to communities? I think they might. Here's why. At the writing of this article I am sitting amidst an overwhelming body of evidence that ours is a resilient faith community. Already in this pandemic Saint John's has worked through our collective and individual anxieties, our grief at what has

already been lost, our fear for loved ones and friends, and begun to transform this experience into something good. Each week hundreds of check-in calls are happening by vestry members and lay leaders and clergy volunteers. We are creating webs of support around and through the community to ensure that we are more connected and in touch than ever before. Volunteers and staff have worked double-time to retool our worshipping, studying, socializing life to one that works online and virtually. We've seen house groups and committees working hard to stay connected. Our members are sewing masks for neighbors and medical workers. Prayer chains are redoubling their efforts to lift up and remember before God the needs of this community. And, already thousands of new dollars have been raised to support parishioners and neighbors in need, the hungry, the vulnerable, and those economically impacted by this pandemic. Resilience is evident everywhere I look at Saint John's. We wish this pandemic had never happened. It has been painful already, and undoubtedly it will continue for some time. Yet, we are already making good news out of bad, finding meaning and light where before there had only been confusion, fear, and darkness.





This is tragic optimism, or, from my perspective, this is Christian hope, hope that looks like the Cross and empty tomb, tinged by the reality of pain and loss, touched by death, and yet pointing us to a God whose love transcends and redeems the greatest hurts we can endure. On Easter Sunday the celebrant at the National Cathedral, The Right Reverend Mariann Budde consecrated the bread and wine, inviting us into an act of spiritual communion, encouraging us to look with longing, grief, and hope on the body and blood broken and poured out at the altar. I was not prepared for the feelings of deep yearning that welled up within me at the sight of the sacrament remaining untouched on the table. There was the crucified and risen Jesus, out in front of us, given for us, awaiting us, calling us in the midst of our own brokenness to give to and serve and love the world. Whatever comes, we are given this season of pain and hurt and fear by no fault or cause of our own, and yet I am grateful to be amidst a body that is hurting yet resilient, afraid yet hopeful, broken at times, yet still giving of ourselves for the healing of the world. I am grateful for the hope we carry together.

Jund +

## **BEING CHURCH IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC**

#### By Mary E. Johnson

There is a small town in southeastern South Dakota called Tabor (Tay-bur). It is home to around 500 people, most of whom are of Czech heritage. Tabor was settled in the 1870's by Czech, Bohemian, and Slovakian immigrants in search of land to farm. The people of Tabor are proud of their heritage and their history.

There is one church in Tabor - Saint Wenceslaus Catholic Church, named for the patron saint of The Czech Republic. Next to the church is the cemetery where the townspeople have been burying their dead for nearly 150 years.

A stroll through the Saint Wenceslaus cemetery provides a stark reminder of history. Nearly half of the headstones bear the death date of 1918 - the beginning of the "Spanish flu" pandemic that lasted for two years, infected 500 million people and killed more than 50 million. Like COVID-19, the "Spanish flu" was caused by a novel virus for which there was no known treatment. Transmission was aided, in part, by WWI soldiers crammed in barracks and then returning to their homes by train, bringing the virus with them. Young adults were disproportionately effected and death came quickly. Tabor was nearly eliminated.

The history-keepers from the era of the "Spanish flu" are gone. But if they were still with us they would tell stories of collective fear, anxiety for the future, and the belief that the world would never be the same. They would talk about the disappearance of "normal daily life," neighbors fearing neighbors, and the devastation of social isolation. They would tell stories of funerals so numerous that loved ones literally didn't have time to grieve.

Today we face another pandemic - one also caused by a novel virus, one making a global impact, one whose transmission is aided by personto-person contact. But we live in a different time now. We know more about epidemiology and disease transmission. We understand the crucial role of social distancing in risk-reduction. In the absence of face-to-face contact we have multiple ways to connect and communicate with one another. Technology enables many of us to continue our professional activities while in quarantine. Even so, we are facing a pandemic - a global health crisis.

I don't know how to face a pandemic or to comprehend its potential for loss and devastation. I often catch myself thinking about making social plans with friends, only to remember that we aren't doing that right now.

It is easier for me to ask questions like, "How did this happen?" and "Why weren't we better prepared?" and "Why can't we get ahead of this?" I wonder if our ancestors who lived through the flu in 1918-20 asked similar questions. I wonder if they knew how to face a pandemic that touched every citizen in every town everywhere.

Perhaps because COVID-19 is a new disease, caused by a new (to humans) virus, we might think that what is happening in our world today has never happened before. In fact, our world has seen multiple pandemics and even more numerous epidemics. The "Asian flu" pandemic killed 2 million people worldwide from 1956-58. Another flu pandemic, sometimes referred to as the "Hong Kong flu" took a million lives worldwide in 1968. And it took the HIV/AIDS virus, originally referred to as "Gay-Related Immune Deficiency" just a few years to kill 36 million people worldwide.

I met my first patient with AIDS in Seattle in 1978 when I was a chaplain intern. I thought she was a young woman with a rare, destructive, collegedorm-acquired infection. That's what everyone on her care team thought. And then she died. Over the next twelve years or so, I would sit with many, many desperately ill men and women, who had AIDS, many of whom were younger than me. Many of them lived in fear that their health issues would be revealed. They feared discrimination, violence, abandonment. They all, a generation of them, died leaving behind their grieving communities. At the height of the pandemic one healthcare professional working in an epicenter said, "It's like being in a war."

Pandemics, like other crises, cause grief. We grieve the loss of normalcy, the loss of the ease of human contact, the loss of a certain future, the loss of security, the loss of stability, the loss of serenity and, for some, existential certitude. For those taken in death, we grieve the loss of acquaintances, colleagues, friends and loved ones.

Pandemics, like other crises, also provide opportunities. We have the opportunity to make safe choices, the opportunity to respect the dignity of every human person, the opportunity to be a part of the community, the opportunity to respond with compassion to those around us, the opportunity to reach out altruistically, the opportunity to be grateful, the opportunity to be guided by our faith.

From my experience as a hospital chaplain in the context of HIV/AIDS in the 1980's and '90's I learned that it is crucial for pastoral caregivers and other people of faith to care for our own spirits if we are to be helpful to others.

Keep your prayer life vibrant. Practice whatever disciplines are meaningful for you. For example, I prepared myself for pastoral visits by reciting Ps 51:10 - "Create in me a clean heart, O God; make within me a right spirit." This was my way of focusing and seeking God's guidance in my efforts to remember that God is God and I am not.

Keep your faith community life vibrant. I was fortunate enough to be a member of a large chaplaincy staff. Each day began with prayer. Members of the chaplaincy staff would have the opportunity to discreetly bring prayer concerns to the group. This was followed by a brief conference during which the night chaplain would debrief overnight events and make referrals for ongoing pastoral care. Looking back over my 30+year tenure, those morning prayer gatherings were spiritual life-savers. Not only did they provide the chaplaincy staff the opportunity to share our faith journeys, but our communal prayer life enlivened our community and enhanced our collegiality. This greatly strengthened our overall ministry and was of ultimate benefit to our patients.

Find a way to safely document your experience. People who journal often review what they have written as a year-end ritual. It is a chance to reflect on the meaning of events, to open oneself to the presence of the Holy Spirit, and to recognize how

you have been changed, perhaps transformed by your experience. As our Rector often reminds us, Saint John the Evangelist is the "church of the open door". How might our "doors" remain open as we practice our shared faith life in new ways? How about if we call one another, send text messages, write cards, gather online for meetings, fellowship and worship?

God is calling us out of the church building to be Christ's love to all people. May we pray for the grace to be open to that call in new, unpredictable, ever-changing, and exciting ways.



## I WILL BE WITH YOU: RESOURCES FOR EMOTIONAL HEALTH DURING COVID-19

#### By Sarah Dull

The phrase "knowledge is power" is often attributed to Francis Bacon, from his Meditationes Sacrae (1597). Thomas Jefferson used the phrase in his correspondence on at least four occasions. I agree with the sentiment of this expression but wonder if these statesmen could envision the expanse of information we now find ourselves bombarded with on a daily, hourly, and sometimes moment to moment basis.

The conflicting data and contradictory advice can be overwhelming and dangerous. Therefore, finding reliable sources is critical. Since the current pandemic took hold, St. John's staff have been collating credible resources to guide our response and assist the parish. In the spirit of Bacon and Jefferson's counsel, to empower ourselves through knowledge, we encourage you to familiarize yourself with the following information.

Episcopal Relief & Development (ERD) works to facilitate healthier, more fulfilling lives in communities struggling with hunger, poverty, disaster, and disease. They have advised that people tend to go through a range of emotions during a disaster which can look remarkably similar to other types of grief processes. ERD says the Life Cycle during COVID-19 will likely have a longer period of disillusionment given how long the quarantines and economic impacts are likely to last. Because of the length of this difficult period, it is important for us to be aware of the kinds of consequences this acute stress can have including substance abuse, family violence, mental health challenges, and risk of suicide.

Everyone, even those without prior histories of substance abuse, family violence or mental health conditions, may be struggling with those issues now or in the coming weeks. If you have concerns about these, or any other issues, it is important to reach out for help. In addition to the resources below, St. John's is a safe community. Our staff and pastoral care team will lovingly support you and your family without judgement.

The first step to fighting **substance abuse** is seeking professional help. It takes a lot of courage to seek help and fight an addiction. If you would like support, St. John's staff and pastoral caregivers will be with you every step of the way. In some locations 12-step meetings have been adapted to adhere to social distancing guidelines, there are also many online options.

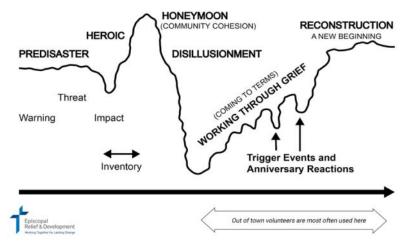
> • To find meetings, call AA Intergroup, 651 -227-5502 or AA Meeting Locator, 1-844-334 -6862.

• For the Women's AA group that usually meets on Saturday mornings at St. John's call Kim S., 262-707-4690.

• Hazelden Betty Ford Center is offering <u>Virtual Addiction Treatment and Recovery</u> <u>Support</u>.

• <u>United way 211</u> offers a 24-hour free counseling hotline for people who need information to help them fight their addiction and resources for families and friends. For confidential assistance call 1-800-543-7709.





• Minnesota Department of Human Services Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division's helpline assists people who need counseling for their loved ones. Call 651-431-2460 to contact a medical professional.

If you are worried about **violence**, work on developing a safety plan. Everyone should be aware of what triggers their anger and what actions they can take to diffuse it. Talking to someone about strategies to deal with your own anger or with aggression from someone in your home can help. Shelters and other essential operations are <u>still open</u> and follow guidelines to help keep people healthy.

- National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233.
- Text HOME to 741741 from anywhere in the US, anytime, about any type of crisis. A live, trained Crisis Counselor will help you move from a hot to a cool moment.
- Alexandra House provides free domestic, sexual, and relationship violence services to women, men, youth, and families. Call their 24-hour helpline, 763-780-2330.
- Sojourner continues to provide essential shelter and advocacy services. Call their 24-hour crisis line, 952-933-7422.

The outbreak of COVID-19 may be stressful for people. **Fear** and **anxiety** about a disease can be overwhelming and cause strong emotions in adults and children. Taking care of yourself, your friends, and your family can help you cope with **stress**. There is lots of online counseling available.

- MN National Alliance on Mental Illness' helpline will continue to operate, 651-645-2948, ext. 117 or <u>namihelps@namimn.org</u>. Many of NAMI's support groups have moved to Zoom. Find NAMI Minnesota's <u>online support groups</u>. They are also offering <u>free Zoom classes</u>.
- <u>The National Child Traumatic Stress Network</u> and <u>The Child Mind Institute</u> offer advice on helping children cope with COVID-19.

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

- Isaiah 43: 1-3

• Outfront Minnesota and The Trevor Project are LGBT+ organizations with crisis hotlines. Call 1-800-800-0350 or 1-866-488-7386.

While many gyms are closed to prevent the spread of this illness, **being active** can help your stress and anxiety.

- Getting out for a walk, run, or bike ride as long as you keep your distance from others – is still advisable.
- Try online workouts at <u>Orangetheory</u> (14+), <u>YouTube</u>, <u>Good Housekeeping</u>, and the <u>Star</u> <u>Tribune</u>.

Sometimes, despite all our best efforts, we or someone we care about can become so overwhelmed by the situation we/they can see no other way out than to end our/their life. In these instances, professional help and community support is critical.

 If you are in a suicidal crisis or emotional distress, call the confidential 24-hour National Suicide Prevention Hotline, 1-800-273-8255. Your call is routed to the nearest crisis center in the national network.

For more resources on these and other issues please go to St. John's <u>COVID-19 resource page</u>. Remember you have a community that cares about you, and a God that is with you and for you. We will get through this together, with God's infinite love.

## **MUSIC AND GRIEF**

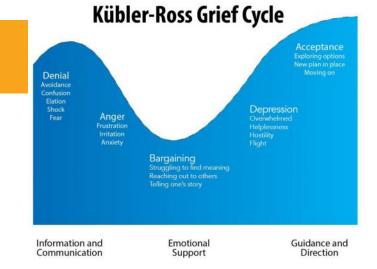
#### By The Rev. Craig Lemming

Scott Berinato concludes his recent <u>article on grief</u> <u>for the Harvard Business Review</u> with these words of affirmation and encouragement: "It's absurd to think we shouldn't feel grief right now. Let yourself feel the grief and keep going." For me, music is the most reliable conduit which connects and engages me authentically and viscerally with feeling the complex, interconnected emotions wrapped up in the human process of grieving. As Oliver Sacks writes, "Music, uniquely among the arts, is both completely abstract and profoundly emotional. It has no power to represent anything particular or external, but it has a unique power to express inner states or feelings. Music can pierce the heart directly; it needs no mediation."

The purpose of this article is to explore the ways music helps us to feel our way through the five interconnected aspects of grief in Elisabeth Kübler-Ross's classic model for understanding the meaning of loss.

These five emotional stages of grief are not experienced in a linear progression. Rather they are intertwined emotions which come to us in waves that ebb and flow. When these waves crash into our being, if we courageously let ourselves feel the grief and integrate those emotions in healthy ways, we cultivate a deep spiritual and emotional resilience and we become more well-rounded, compassionate, and sincere. The purpose for sharing some of the music which helps me to grieve is explained in Oliver Sacks' observation that "while such music makes one experience pain and grief more intensely, it brings solace and consolation at the same time."

In the midst of this COVID-19 pandemic, grief is our companion. My hope is that you will be inspired by these reflections to ponder and explore music that helps you connect with the emotional aspects of grief. You might not share my tastes in



music, so please discuss this article with others and use music selections that do help you to make meaning of the losses you grieve. By listening to the universal language of music together, we might bring solace and consolation to those who are suffering through this intensely painful time.

#### Denial

When we encounter the shock of a loss – both real or anticipated – we sometimes reject that painful reality and we try to cling to a false or unrealistic illusion in order to avoid the psychological pain of embracing that difficult truth. In Franz Schubert's lied Der Erlkönig or "The Erlking," the father in Goethe's poem denies the realities of his son's terrifying encounters with the deadly Erlking; that is, until the song's final, spine-chilling chord. I marvel at this riveting performance by Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau and Gerald Moore who communicate the three distinct voices of the poem's protagonists beautifully.



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#### Anger

When we can longer deny the reality of loss, we become frustrated, bitter, enraged, and look for someone to blame. We need not be ashamed of our anger, for anger is an emotional symbol that points to what we care most deeply about, and this is typically a cherished relationship that is being threatened or harmed. Giuseppe Verdi's setting of the "Dies Irae" in his Requiem Mass expresses the overwhelming wrath that we sometimes feel in the midst of grief.



**CLICK IMAGE TO ACCESS LINKED VIDEO** 

"There is a profound belonging in music which at certain times in your life can embrace and reach you more deeply than a friend or lover. It is as though the music instinctively knows where you dwell and what you need."

- John O'Donohue, 'Beauty: The Invisible Embrace'

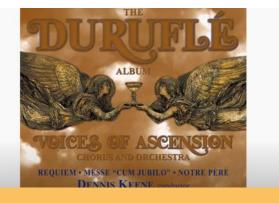


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"It is a wonderful moment, then, when a voice of kindness and care reaches towards you. Suffering brings you to a land where no-one can find you. Yet when the human voice focuses in empathetic tenderness, it can find its way across any distance to the desolate heart of another's pain. The healing voice becomes the inner presence of the friend, watchful and kind at the source." – John O'Donohue, 'Beauty: The Invisible Embrace'

#### Bargaining

In Claudio Monteverdi's "Lamento della Ninfa" we encounter a nymph bargaining with Love after the nymph's lover has been unfaithful. Three shepherds sympathetically comment on the nymph's painful and futile negotiations with Love. In grief we try to negotiate – sometimes even with God – an unrealistic delay, a trade or bargain, in an attempt to avoid and protect ourselves or our loved ones from feeling the inevitable pain of loss.



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#### Depression

In the depths of depression, we mourn our aggregate losses. When I find myself in this desolate emotional place, I listen to Maurice Duruflé's Requiem. For me, God's mercy is felt viscerally in the "Kyrie," the climax of which typically brings me to cathartic tears.

"Perhaps listening to music renews the heart precisely for this reason: it plumbs the gravity of sorrow until it finds the point of submerged light and lightness. Listening to music stirs the heavy heart; it alters the gravity. Unconsciously it schools us in a different way to hold sorrow." – John O'Donohue, 'Beauty: The Invisible Embrace'

#### Acceptance

Eventually, in some undetermined time or season, we begin to embrace the tragic reality of our losses. Nina Simone's rendition of Bernard Ighner's "Everything Must Change" exemplifies for me a truth James Baldwin describes in his essay titled "The Uses of the Blues." He writes, "the acceptance of this anguish one finds in the blues, and the expression of it, creates also, however odd this may sound, a kind of joy."



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#### Meaning

Elisabeth Kübler-Ross later proposed "Meaning" as the sixth aspect of our grief process. I conclude with one of the most meaningful pieces of music I listen to when I experience grief in my Christian faith: Edgar Bainton's anthem "And I Saw A New Heaven." May this divine setting of words from the Revelation to Saint John the Evangelist bring you God's solace and consolation as we journey together through seasons of grief.

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away." – Revelation 21:4

## SERVICE INFORMATION

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

### SUNDAY SCHEDULE

- 9 am Youth and Adult Formation on Facebook.
- 10 am Worship on Zoom and YouTube.
  <u>Click here</u> for more instructions, including how to call-in, or to view the Liturgy and Propers.
- 11 am Coffee Hour on Zoom.
- 2 pm Godly Play on Facebook.
- 7 pm Basics through May 17.
  <u>Click here</u> for details and to register.

### **OTHER OFFERINGS**

- Sung Compline: Thursdays at 7pm on Facebook.
- Morning Prayer: Everyday at 8am on Facebook.
- **Thursday Book Group:** 10am, 1st and 3rd Thursdays of the month on <u>Zoom</u>.
- Habits of Grace: Mondays with Presiding Bishop Curry <u>here</u>.

## READERS:

Bob Linehan, Coordinator (<u>rlinehan@gmail.com</u>) May 3: Mary Johnson May 10: John Docherty May 17: Sabine Krall May 24: Colleen Swope May 31: Richard Day Jun 7: Sr. Julian Smith-Boyer

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, <u>click here</u> 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!

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO ...

### MAY

- 1 Borton, David
- 2 Bressoud, Jan Johnson, Todd
- 3 Gemlo, Cameron
- 5 Hansen, Oak Scheel, Jackson
- 6 Miller, Latham Nicholson, John
- 8 Koshy, Benjamin10 Baxter, Sarah
- McCarthy, Susan
- 11 Spencer, Maxwell
- 12 Schmidt, Ailsa
- 13 Cook, Monica Tiller Bristol, Marie
- 14 Howie, Anne
- 15 Docherty, Charlie Johnson, Paul

- 16 Fernstrum, Wendy Loch, Lauren Sutton, Elaine
- 18 Merrill, Phyllis
- 19 Ek, Melissa Johnson, Jim
- 20 Berger-Thompson, Estelle
- 21 Madsen, John
- 22 Olsen, Andrew
- 23 Gilbertson, Peter Schmidt, Simon
- 24 Brynteson, Richard Davis, Claire Grundhauser, Tony Quinn, Dan
- 27 Fink, Elizabeth
- 29 Diedrich, Judy
- 30 Lindeke, Barbara
- 31 Brown, Kathy

Johnson, Maren Wagner Sherer, Madeleine

#### JUNE

- 3 NeepayePeno, Pyne
- 4 Matter, Christopher
- 5 Smith, Harrison
- Sommers, Barbara
- 7 McInroy, Oliver
- 8 Schmidt, Patrick
- 11 MacIntosh, Susan
- Odney, Eric
  Lindeke, Craig Ryan, Sam
- 14 Holland, Laura
- 16 Sweigert, Cynthia Bronson
- 17 McCann, Dagan
- 18 Cook, Edward

- Wallace-Reid, Diane
- 21 Matter, Rianna
- 22 Hansen, Ian
- 23 Gemlo, Eva Olsen, Jeff
- 25 Voje, Patty
- 26 Ellingson, Lacey Solid, Genevieve
- 27 Powers, Henry Ragland, Susie
- 29 Kinkead, John Svrluga, William
- 30 Solid, Craig

Have your address or phone number changed? Is your birthday missing or incorrect? Log on to My St. John's (<u>Click here</u>) to update your records.