

THE ST. JOHN NEWS

May 2020

The Communion of Saints On Gathering Together Again

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father through Jesus Christ our Lord. It is my prayer that all of you continue to manage well through this health crisis. If any of you have needs that the congregation of St. John may be able to fulfill, please let me know.

You have likely heard this phrase thrown about: “the new normal.” It is in reference to our current state of affairs, that of sheltering-in-place, social distancing, and small group gatherings of ten people or less. Is this “the new normal”? Could life really keep going on like this indefinitely? It did not after such disasters as the Spanish flu, the Polio outbreak, and the Swine flu pandemic. It likely will not after this, either, especially for the Church.

Rather than refer to these current changes as “the new normal,” it is better stated that this is “the temporary normal.” It will take some time to revert back to the older ways. Some will do so more quickly than others. And that is okay. In such circumstances we have had to make use of “virtual” gatherings, such as for worship and meetings. They have almost become a necessity. But they can never replace the real experience. Nor should they. Some Christians have argued that the body of Christ exists across time and space and together always in a virtual way. While there is truth in this, such a “virtual” experience is still only “virtual.” It is not a complete and permanent substitute for the original. And the virtual only keeps us longing for the authentic.

God has created us to be social creatures. “It is not good for man to be alone” (Genesis 2). Yes, there are varying levels of these interactions, but we are all made to need others. Care and interaction can certainly take place from afar, but only for so long. Being within close proximity to one another again is something that all of us needs, whether we think so or not. While we as a people may have never experienced such a situation as this before, this is not the first time illness and destruction has torn through the world. And each time, God permits and blesses the rebuilding and rejoining of groups that are gathered together.

And, quite usually, leading the way is the Church. Tracking back through the Scriptures, it is clear that the people of God gathered together, in close proximity to each other. Hundreds of thousands surged together out of Egypt after finally being set free. At the celebration of every major feast, the Israelite people came in and out of the tabernacle to offer their sacrifices and to celebrate their bonds as the people of God. When the temple was constructed in Jerusalem, thousands of people would fill the temple and its courts three times every year at least to bring their offerings to the Lord and hear his Word proclaimed.

Crowds gathered around John the Baptizer at the Jordan River (Matthew 3:5; Mark 1:5). Over five thousand people gathered close enough to Jesus to hear him speak before he fed them all with five loaves of bread and two fish, distributed by twelve disciples who traveled in close proximity to the groups gathered closely together as they sat upon the ground (Matthew 14:21; Mark 6:44; Luke 9:14; John 6:10). Throngs of people surrounded Jesus as he rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:8–9; Luke 19:37; John 12:17–19).

And following Jesus’ resurrection, after the Holy Spirit had been sent upon the disciples of Jesus, Peter stood up and preached to the crowds gathered for the Jewish harvest festival (Acts 2:14–36). After his words of Law and Gospel, condemning the people for their crucifixion of Jesus and instructing them that repentance and Baptism was the remedy for their guilt, about three thousand were added to their number that day (Acts 2:41). And they, being those who were baptized and were now Christians, devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers (Acts 2:42). Here, we are shown a picture of the body of Christ. Here, we see them gathered together as the

MAY 2020

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. Acts 2:42

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat																																																																																																		
<p><i>Church Office</i> 359-1123</p> <p><i>School Office</i> 359-1714</p>	<p><i>Pastor Caithamer's</i> <i>day off: Fridays</i></p>				1	2																																																																																																		
<p>3 <i>4th Sunday of Easter</i></p> <p>Worship Service Online</p>	4	<p>5</p> <p>6:00 Fellowship Board, Evangelism, Trustees</p> <p>6:30 School Board</p>	6	7	8	9																																																																																																		
<p>10 <i>5th Sunday of Easter</i></p> <p>Worship Service Online</p> <p><i>Mother's Day</i></p>	<p>11</p> <p>6:00 Finance Board</p>	<p>12</p> <p>6:00 Elders</p>	13	14	15	16																																																																																																		
<p>17 <i>6th Sunday of Easter</i></p> <p>Worship Service Online</p>	<p>18</p> <p><i>Newsletter Deadline</i></p>	<p>19</p> <p>6:00 Council</p>	20	21	22	23																																																																																																		
<p>24 <i>7th Sunday of Easter</i></p> <p>Worship Service Online</p>	<p>25 <i>Memorial Day</i></p> <p><i>Church & School</i> <i>Closed</i></p>	<p>26</p> <p>6:00 Parish Ed 7:00 Youth Board</p>	27	28 <i>Ascension</i>	29	30																																																																																																		
<p>31 <i>Day of Pentecost</i></p> <p>Worship Service Online</p>					<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="7">April 2020</th> </tr> <tr> <th>S</th> <th>M</th> <th>T</th> <th>W</th> <th>T</th> <th>F</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> </tr> <tr> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> <td>17</td> <td>18</td> </tr> <tr> <td>19</td> <td>20</td> <td>21</td> <td>22</td> <td>23</td> <td>24</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>26</td> <td>27</td> <td>28</td> <td>29</td> <td>30</td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	April 2020							S	M	T	W	T	F	S				1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30			<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="7">June 2020</th> </tr> <tr> <th>S</th> <th>M</th> <th>T</th> <th>W</th> <th>T</th> <th>F</th> <th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td></td> <td>1</td> <td>2</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> <td>5</td> <td>6</td> </tr> <tr> <td>7</td> <td>8</td> <td>9</td> <td>10</td> <td>11</td> <td>12</td> <td>13</td> </tr> <tr> <td>14</td> <td>15</td> <td>16</td> <td>17</td> <td>18</td> <td>19</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>21</td> <td>22</td> <td>23</td> <td>24</td> <td>25</td> <td>26</td> <td>27</td> </tr> <tr> <td>28</td> <td>29</td> <td>30</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	June 2020							S	M	T	W	T	F	S		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
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