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JULY 2021  
VOLUME 34.7

# The Messenger

*St. John's United Church of Christ*



## Message from the Pastor

Dear friends,

The St. John's interim ministry project is underway, and the first phase which looks at congregational history is making great progress. It's first task, presenting church historical records and artifacts, has been largely accomplished with the assembly of the display picture below. You will find this exhibit on the elevator door landing in the church, and I want to encourage everyone to visit the space when you come to worship at church on Sunday, July 11th.

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Yes, we are returning to live worship this month, and yes, it will be held in the sanctuary. A special theme will form the focus of our worship time, which is church leadership. The congregation at St. John's has relied on lay leaders for an extended period of time, displaced from the sanctuary by required renovations and pandemic protocol. The blessing of willing and capable leadership during this period is certainly one worthy of celebration; I hope you will all come to worship with that spirit in your hearts.

Amidst encouraging signs of recovery from the COVID-19 scourge, your church will still urge safe behavioral practices. Please read the rules for gathering outlined in this issue and mind the guidelines posted in the church building as we continue to support community efforts to restore some sense of "normal". And make your appreciation for all God has done and is doing through your ongoing praise and prayer!

Yours in Christ,  
Pastor Tom

Display created by the  
Congregational History Team:  
Betsy and Richard Bighinatti,  
David Craig, Johanna Gilbert,  
and Dreama Terrill



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# A Note of Thanks from Pastor Tom

Thank you all for including me in your prayers during my recovery from surgery. The love and care expressed, in thoughts and meals and other ways, has lifted my spirits and been a sustaining energy for me these past few weeks. I look forward to joining you in the sanctuary on July 11th and the days ahead. Bless the day!

Pastor Tom

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# July Devotional

Hebrews 10:24-25

“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.”

As we approach a return to in-person worship, does 2019 seem like an eternity ago? Remember when going to church was routine, an almost rote experience? There's a relief and excitement about being able to gather in-person that just cannot be replaced by the technology of Zoom. We often hear that church is not a building but the people themselves. While that is certainly true, we as people of faith are meant to be together, covenanted together to help each other follow God.

There are incredible advantages to technology but our faith life with each other is diminished when we are apart. Worshipping from a distance may work for a while but it cannot substitute for actually gathering physically together.

As we look forward to July 11th and being together in the sanctuary, let's embody the love and good works noted in the scripture above and show up in person. Gathering together is a meaningful way to encourage each other in our faith journeys.

Terri Weaver

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# From the Council President

*“So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord – for we walk by faith, not by sight.... So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!”*

2 Corinthians 5: 6-7, 17

I was honored to be selected for a one-year term as President by the Church Council at its June 14th meeting, and very much appreciate the confidence expressed in that selection. I want to thank Dreama Terrill for the wonderful leadership that she provided to us as President during the past three years, and ask for your prayers and support as we move forward to build on the great tradition of St. John's.

As we emerge from the pandemic, and are able to gather once more for in-person worship, starting on July 11th, there is a strong temptation to go back to the way things were “before,” to the old creation. But our challenge now is to acknowledge our impulse to go back to the old, while Jesus urges us forward into the new.

During the pandemic, we suspended in-person worship to protect those who were most susceptible to infection, to help protect our communities, our families and ourselves. Even with those sacrifices, some 600,000 people died of Covid-19 in this country alone. May they rest in peace, and may their families and loved ones know God's peace and grace in their grief.

Now that we are emerging from pandemic time, we long to get back to the old, familiar ways of doing things. But we have been changed by this pandemic in ways that we are only beginning to understand. We have lost much, in addition to those who have died. Many have lost health as they continue to live with long-term effects of Covid-19. Many have lost jobs. We have lost favorite restaurants and shops and other services. We have lost some confidence in ourselves and in each other.

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But we have also gained much. We have learned new ways to worship and new ways to connect with people who didn't or weren't able to come to worship with us before. We have discovered new strengths and resilience. We have discovered ways of being family when we couldn't be physically present for each other, and we learned how to continue to be Church when we couldn't worship in person.

As we return to the Sanctuary, we will continue to exercise restraint for the sake of the most vulnerable, including children under the age of 12 and others who cannot be vaccinated, and we will continue to offer online worship for those who are unable or uncomfortable coming back to in-person worship. For now, we will continue to wear masks indoors. And although some may find this frustrating, we look forward to the day when these restrictions will no longer be necessary.

We have much to look forward to. The Congregational Life and Care Committee is hard at work planning upcoming activities, including a return to indoor Fellowship lunches, an August baseball game outing, a September picnic, applesauce-making in October and the return of the German Heritage Dinner in November. The Missions and Outreach Committee is working to identify community needs to which St. John's can respond, both with our hands-on labor and our financial support. Pastor Tom continues to help us discern our way in the Interim Ministry process, ultimately leading to a search for a new Settled Pastor. The Trustees and Renovations Committee are continuing to oversee the completion of repairs to equip our building for the next phase of our ministry to the community and to each other.

But these committees and the Church Council can't do it alone. We need your prayers, your ideas, your input and your participation. As noted in the excerpts from Paul's Second Letter to the Corinthians quoted above, we are on the brink of a new creation. Please help make it so!

Jeff Jacobs  
jwjacobs9@gmail.com  
(202) 361-9887

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# July Mission of the Month: FeedMore

Starting out as “Meals on Wheels” for shut-ins, Feed More has evolved into so very much more over the years. Directly from its website, here is what it does:

***Feed More collects, prepares and distributes food to your neighbors who struggle with hunger.***

You might not know it, but 1 out of every 10 individuals in Central Virginia is food insecure, meaning that more than 160,000 of our neighbors face hunger on a daily basis. Many of these neighbors of ours are working one or more jobs and are barely scraping enough together to get by each month. These are our neighbors who are living paycheck to paycheck when an unexpected medical expense or car trouble takes them down, depleting what little savings they have. These are our neighbors who are forced to make tough choices each month between basic necessities – pay the electricity bill or buy healthy groceries for well-balanced meals for themselves and their families. In 2020, with the support of the community, Feed More distributed 37,021,220 pounds of food, which is the equivalent of 30,851,017 meals to our neighbors in need. Most of their clients only need help for a few times, many visiting the pantries less than 7 times before they are back on their feet.



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Additionally, in our area, thousands of kids and teens are receiving free or reduced lunch. Due to the Pandemic and when school ends, these kids and teens are without those lunches. Feed More's Summer Food Service Program provides thousands of children and teens with healthy and reliable breakfast and lunch meals, free of charge, during the summer. During the Pandemic, Feed More has worked to fill the gap for the youth who were attending school virtually.

St. John's has been a supporter of Feed More for years, and now they need us even more as they restock their pantries for the onslaught of summer needs. Please give generously to our July Mission of the Month. You can give via check (writing "Mission" on the memo line) or on-line giving through our website.

Thank you for your generous response.



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# July Announcements

## **Wednesday Night Bible Study Fellowship**

All are invited to participate in our Wednesday Night Bible Study from 7:00 to 8:00 PM on Zoom, for 14 weeks beginning on June 2nd. Join other members of our beloved community to study the Word. All are invited, welcomed and affirmed. This is a great way to be with others in a time of study and fellowship.

We will be studying the Book of Acts, sometimes known as the Acts of the Apostles, with Interim Pastor Tom Gerstenlauer and Scott Siefert as our co-facilitators. Major themes, including the universality of the Gospel, the role of women, the work of the Holy Spirit, the fulfillment of Old Testament promises, and the nature and mission of the Christian church, will connect with St. John's active discernment in this time of interim ministry.

We will be using the Kerygma Program study guide, which costs \$22. Please contact Jeff Jacobs, at [jwjacobs9@gmail.com](mailto:jwjacobs9@gmail.com) or (202) 361-9887, if you'd like to order a book. We would love to have you in our group, so if cost is an issue we may be able to help out. If you have any questions about the study, please contact Scott Siefert at (804) 350-0826, or email him at [sesiefert@gmail.com](mailto:sesiefert@gmail.com).

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# July Announcements

## **Pastoral Care**

We are fortunate to have The Rev. Tom Gerstenlauer with us to provide spiritual support and pastoral care to our congregation. He can be reached at [revtrgerst@gmail.com](mailto:revtrgerst@gmail.com) or (413) 378-0828. As you know, Pastor Tom is serving as our Interim Pastor on a three-quarters time basis, and this month will be unavailable from July 19-25. During that time, please contact the church office at (804) 358-9291 with any pastoral care emergencies.

## **Do you need food, or know someone who does?**

As the pandemic continues, and people may be quarantined or feel unsafe going to the store, some of us may need help in maintaining food security, or know others who do. As you know, we are blessed with many terrific cooks at St. John's, and many have offered to provide meals to those who may need assistance. If you are having trouble getting to the store, would like to have some freshly-made food delivered, or know someone in need, please contact Jeff Jacobs at [jwjacobs9@gmail.com](mailto:jwjacobs9@gmail.com) or (202) 361-9887. Likewise, if you are able to be "on-call" to respond to a need for food, and have not already let Jeff know, please contact him to know of your availability.

## **Have you been vaccinated?**

The Virginia Department of Health has announced that everyone aged 12 and older is eligible for a Covid vaccination. We recommend and encourage everyone to be vaccinated, both to protect yourself and to protect those around you. If you need help in registering for a vaccination, please contact Jeff Jacobs (at [jwjacobs9@gmail.com](mailto:jwjacobs9@gmail.com) or (202) 361-9887) or Betsy Bighinatti (at [grandude42@aol.com](mailto:grandude42@aol.com) or (804) 502-1007) for assistance.

## **New Officers Elected**

This week the Church Council met by Zoom for its regular monthly meeting, and after thanking Dreama Terrill with a round of applause for her service and leadership as President during the past three years, elected new officers for the church year beginning this month. The new officers are: President, Jeff Jacobs; Vice President, Kathy Freise; Secretary, Lynn Snyder; and Treasurer, Betsy Bighinatti. Congratulations to all.

## **In Sympathy**

We extend our condolences to the family and friends of Laureen Yust (Karen-Marie Yust's mother), who died on June 21st in Goodrich, Texas of metastatic pancreatic cancer. May she know the eternal peace of God's love.

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# July Announcements

## **Return to in-person worship, July 11th**

We will be returning to in-person Sunday worship in the sanctuary on July 11th!! Although it appears that most members of our congregation have been vaccinated, we are asking everyone to continue to wear masks while in the building to protect guests and those who may not have been vaccinated. We will have masks available for those who need them. We will be able to sing hymns during the service, but while seated and masked. Also, you will see that we have marked every other pew for occupancy in order to maintain appropriate distancing. Although many of us have not seen each other in person for many months, please do not congregate in the aisle before or after the service. And instead of passing the collection plates, we will place them at the doors for you to deposit your offerings on your way in or out of the building. After the service we will have a time for fellowship and refreshments (including treats from David Craig) outside, during which masks will not be required.

While you are in the building, we hope you will take advantage of the opportunity to view the new display of church memorabilia in the alcove just outside the Parlor by the elevator door, prepared by the interim ministry history project group (thanks to Betsy and Richard Bighinatti, David Craig, Johanna Gilbert and Dreama Terrill). You should also notice the newly-restored front and side doors; the new carpeting in the narthex and the Lombardy Street entrance foyer; upgraded rest rooms, with hot water in the sinks; new energy-efficient LED lighting throughout the building; an upgraded elevator and new chairlift on the stairs leading from the back parking area to the Parlor; and a raised clearance (no more hitting your head!) on the door from the Parlor to the Sanctuary.

Although parking continues to be available on Sunday mornings along the Monument Avenue median strip, we now have designated parking spaces (marked "CH") in the alley next to the church and along the right-hand and far walls in the apartment building garage.

Finally, for those who are not yet ready to come back to in-person worship, we will continue to stream the service by Zoom, live from the Sanctuary.

Please feel free to contact Jeff Jacobs, at (202) 361-9887 or [jwjacobs9@gmail.com](mailto:jwjacobs9@gmail.com), or The Rev. Tom Gerstenlauer, at (413) 378-0828 or [revtgerst@gmail.com](mailto:revtgerst@gmail.com), if you have any questions.

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# July Announcements

## **UCC General Synod July 11-18**

The UCC's General Synod, under the theme "Rooted In Love", will be held by Zoom this year from July 11-18, with opportunities for educational programs, inspirational speakers and worship. If you are interested in participating, or in learning more about the Synod experience, please contact past attendees Marcie Agee or Dreama Terrill for more information.

## **Fellowship Lunch, July 25th**

With infection rates down and vaccination rates up, we'll return to indoor monthly fellowship lunches on Thursday, July 22nd at 1 PM, at Candela's Ristorante, 11541 Robious Road in North Chesterfield. Please contact Beth Stiegler, at (804) 475-7340 or [bsstiegler@verizon.net](mailto:bsstiegler@verizon.net) to make your reservation.

## **Take me out to the ballgame, August 19th**

We have purchased 12 tickets for the Squirrels game against the Erie SeaWolves on Thursday, August 19th. This is Faith Night, so there will be player faith testimonials before the 6:35 PM first pitch. Tickets are \$12, although if cost is an issue we should be able to help you out. Please contact Betsy Bighinatti at (804) 502-1007 or [grandude42@aol.com](mailto:grandude42@aol.com) to order your tickets. If the first dozen sell out, we'll order more!

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# July 2021 Calendar

Thursday, July 1st, 9 a.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting by Zoom

**Sunday, July 4th, 10 a.m. - Worship Service with Communion by Zoom**

Wednesday, July 7th, 7 p.m - Bible Study by Zoom

Thursday, July 8th, 9 a.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting by Zoom

**Sunday, July 11th, 10 a.m. - Worship Service in-person and by Zoom**

Monday, July 12th, 6:30 p.m. - Church Council Meeting by Zoom

Wednesday, July 14th, 7 p.m - Bible Study by Zoom

Thursday, July 15th, 9 a.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting by Zoom

**Sunday, July 18th, 10 a.m. - Worship Service in-person and by Zoom**

Sunday, July 18th, after post-worship Fellowship Time - Congregational Life & Care Committee meeting in-person

Wednesday, July 21st, 7 p.m - Bible Study by Zoom

Thursday, July 22nd, 9 a.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting by Zoom

Thursday, July 22nd, 1 p.m. – Fellowship Lunch, Candela's Restaurant (Robious Rd.)

**Sunday, July 25th, 10 a.m. - Worship Service in-person and by Zoom**

Wednesday, July 28th, 7 p.m - Bible Study by Zoom

Thursday, July 29th, 9 a.m. - Renovations Committee Meeting by Zoom

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# July Birthdays

July 2nd - Richard Bighinatti

July 2nd - Bill Watson

July 4th - The Rev. Tom Gerstenlauer

July 4th - Lynda Merry

July 6th - Cammie Allen

July 7th - Erin Burnette

July 10th - Sal Anselmo

July 10th - Wyndham Anderson

July 20th - Will Atkinson

July 21st - Lynn Snyder

July 29th - Arthur Dewey



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## **St. John's United Church of Christ**

St. John's United Church of Christ is a diverse community forming a united congregation, seeking to grow our faith, share it with others, and serve God's people wherever the need is present. We are living God's love and all are invited!!!

### **An Open and Affirming Congregation**

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