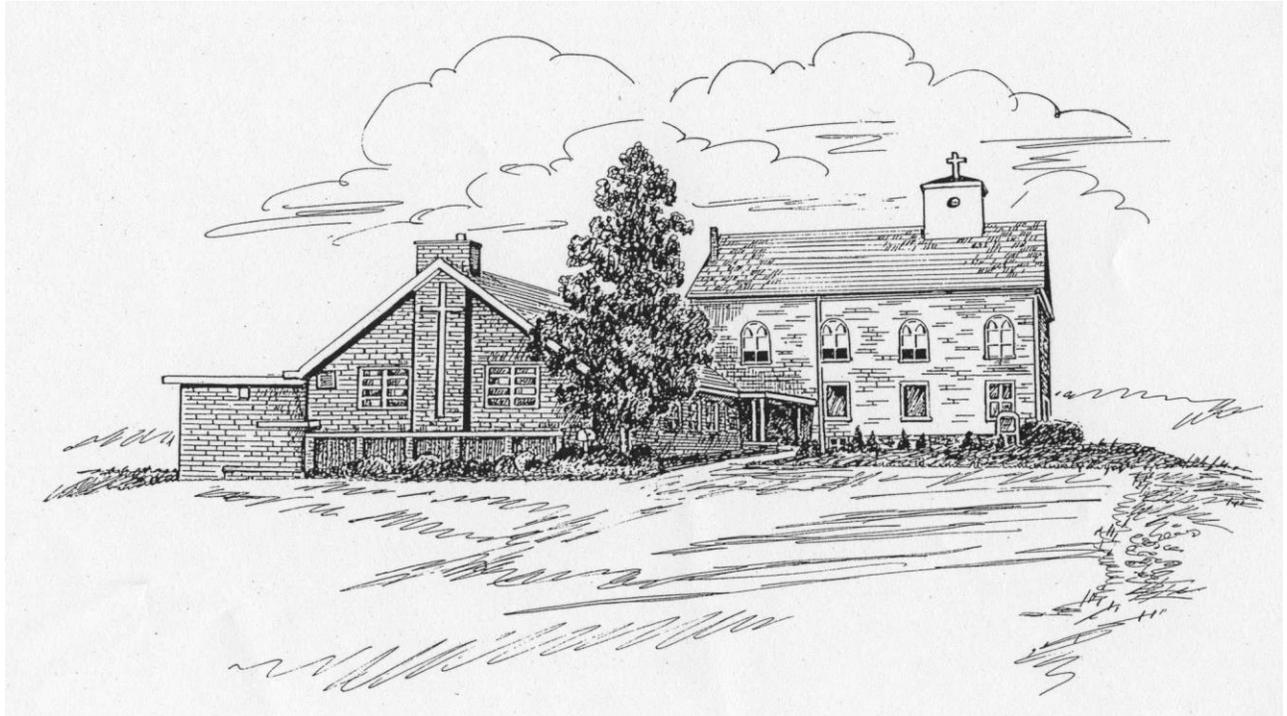


WISPS OF STRAW



St. James Lutheran Church Newsletter

July 2017

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*“Serving Christ in Word and Deed”
more than 265 Years*

Pastor's Letter

Independence

On July 4th, 1776, thirteen English colonies got together in congress and declared their independence from England. We all know that. But was it truly independence? In one sense, of course it was: From that point on the citizens of those colonies could choose to live their lives independent of the rule of King George and the English Parliament. However, in another sense, each colony became *more* dependent on the others. Because of the disruption in trade with Britain, colonial farmers and merchants had to look to trade within the bounds of what was to become the United States. Beyond trade, the thirteen nation-states had to rely on each for their common defense. And finally, the citizens of those nation-states had to determine a structure of governance that would be acceptable since the laws, regulations, and judicial system of the Crown would no longer be valid once "independence" was won. So as the citizens of Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and the other colonies gained their independence from England, they suddenly had the privilege and responsibility of determining their own future.



I tell you that so I can tell you this: we, the current members of St. James, have the **privilege and responsibility** for the ministries at St. James for the sake of the proclamation of the Gospel in this place. We need to take financial responsibility and we need to take activity responsibility, and we need to take relational responsibility.

We need to step into the privilege and responsibility of glorifying Christ with our very lives. In 1 Corinthians 6:20 Paul tells us, "For you were bought with a price; therefore, glorify God in your body." What does this mean? It means Jesus bought and paid for us with his life. Paul says we are either slaves to sin or slaves to Christ. Since Christ paid for us we are slaves to Christ. Therefore, we are to live our lives in ways which glorify God. Our primary way of glorifying God is to worship. It is that simple. When we worship, we glorify God. When we don't, we don't. When we worship, three important things automatically happen: we glorify God, we are strengthened in our faith, and we strengthen the faith of others. When we absent ourselves from worship, we DO NOT glorify God, we weaken our faith, and abandon our brothers and sisters who need to worship with us.

We need to step into the privilege and responsibility of serving others in the name of Christ. The world sees what we do. Those around us see how we invest our time and resources. When we invest our time and our resources in Christ, this brings glory to Christ. But once we leave worship, filled with grace and empowered by the Spirit, then what? Then we have the remaining 167 hours in the week to find ways to bring Christ's love and grace to others. This is done by our words, and our deeds and by the things we refrain from saying and doing. Again, God gives us 168 hours each week. We faithfully invest the first hour in worship. How shall we invest the other 167?

We need to step into the privilege and responsibility of positive Christian fellowship. Positive Christian fellowship is evident because it displays the fruit of the Spirit as listed in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. The fruit of the Spirit is to be the hallmark of every relationship the Christian has. When we are unkind, critical, judgmental, harsh, divisive, dour, miserable, or so, we are squandering the privilege of showing the love of Christ in our relationships, and we do not glorify God. There is so much cultural pressure to be mean-spirited that the Christian must **actively work** to "show a more excellent way." (See. 1 Cor. 12:31 and following).

We need to step into the privilege and responsibility for giving of our God-given treasure to fund the ministries here at St. James. For at least the last decade, we have run deficits off and on. The basic pattern is this: years when St. James has a full-time pastor are years of deficit; years without a pastor generally yield small surpluses. But do not think that the surpluses in the years without a full-time pastor re-fill the silos. This is not the case. Over the years we have relied on using funds from savings or fundraisers to cover our expenses. This is not right. It is not right because it means that we the **current** members are expecting others (those who have gone before us or the patrons of our fundraisers) to pay for our ministry. This has two unavoidable consequences: first this reliance on others **decreases** the level of engagement in the congregation. As we become more focused on raising funds for ministry, we lose our focus on ministry. We spend our time and energy raising funds for ministry, and then have nothing left for the actual doing of ministry. Second, it enables members to give **less** because they assume the borrowing and the fundraisers are covering expenses. This means that we are losing the connection between giving and discipleship. We need to declare our independence from fundraising and borrowing and step into our privilege and responsibility of giving as God calls us.

Because the citizens of this land decided in 1776 and then again in 1787-88 to step into the **privilege and responsibility** of self-governance, the United States was born and God has blessed this land and citizens as a place of liberty and justice, albeit incomplete. Because the farmers, tradesmen and merchants around the village of Straw decided in 1750 to step into the privilege **and responsibility** of forming their own congregation, Straw Church was born. And now, 267 years later, it is my earnest hope and prayer that we, the current members of St. James, will step into the **privilege and responsibility** of carrying forward and expanding the ministries in which we engage for the sake of the community.

P. Kelly

**“STRAW CHURCH: PRIDE IN OUR PAST, STRENGTH IN OUR PRESENT,
LAYING A FOUNDATION FOR OUR FUTURE”**

Shared Ministry Agreement

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 says, "Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil.¹⁰ For if they fall, one will lift up the other; but woe to one who is alone and falls and does not have another to help.¹¹ Again, if two lie together, they keep warm; but how can one keep warm alone?¹² And though one might prevail against another, two will withstand one. A threefold cord is not quickly broken." (NRSV)

Since at least June, 2015, St. James has been in conversation with the Synod and other local Lutheran congregations about the possibility of some sort of shared or mutual ministry. When Pr. Kelly was called in July, 2016, and Pr. Weber of Grace Lutheran in Phillipsburg resigned in August, 2016, this conversation took on a new dimension. Since January 2017, St. James and Grace have joined in a Task Force to discern God's will for us, explore the possibility of sharing professional leadership and to develop a document and structure to coordinate that sharing. As of August 6, 2017, a final document should be available. A draft of this document which has been affirmed by both Councils is being mailed to each congregation household in both St. James and Grace. St. James and Grace Councils will vote on authorizing a congregational meeting to approve (or not) the entering into this agreement on August 15th and 16th, respectively. Anticipating a positive vote by each Council, each congregation will hold a series of "cottage meetings" so that members can become fully informed and discuss this new possibility for expanded ministry. Finally, each congregation will hold congregational meetings for formal congregational authorization.

As we begin to consider the ramifications and benefits of such an agreement, it is important that everyone understand what is, and what is not, being proposed. First and foremost, this is NOT a merger. St. James and Grace will each continue on as separate, distinct, independent organizations. Under this agreement, there will be NO reduction or joining of the support staff in either congregation. There will NOT be the forming of a new entity.

This model of shared ministry is finding increased popularity in the ELCA as costs associated with a full-time rostered leader have become unsustainable for many congregations. The greatest downside is the loss of "on demand" access to the rostered leader. However, the significant reduction in the financial burden allows for greater investment in ministry programs. The other benefit is that it provides a conduit for increasing opportunities for both congregations to do ministry they could not do effectively alone. We have already seen how well sharing works with VBS and catechism programs. We also experienced an enhanced Lenten season because the two congregations came together for worship and fellowship Wednesday evenings.

This is an important step in the future of St. James. Please be sure to read the draft agreement when you receive it in the mail. Then, come to at least one of the cottage meetings and fully participate. Finally, plan on attending the congregational meeting, which could occur as early as Sunday, September 10th.

Congratulations Graduates!!

At Worship on Saturday, June 24th and Sunday, June 25th we recognized and asked God's blessings on our three graduating students:

Tori Esposito
Hayley Hardenbergh.
Dean Peppe



Best wishes to them for happy and successful futures.

Thanks to Prestige Cleaners

Many thanks to Prestige Dry Cleaners (Schoolhouse Village at Rte. 57 and Strykers Rd. for donating their services in cleaning and refreshing our altar linens.

Ice Cream Social

Join our friends from Grace Lutheran Church at 7:00 pm Fridays through August at Castlegate (Rte. 57 next to Piazza Farms) for a good time and some of the best ice cream around.



Financial Snapshot

Month of May	
Income	\$10,851.56
Expenses	\$14,613.49
Net	-\$3,761.93

Social Ministry Notes

With the rapid approach of a new school year, we are again collecting backpacks and other supplies for the needy children of our communities. It is important that no child's education be hampered by the financial circumstances of his or her family.

Items will be collected from now through the end of August. They should be left on the table in the Frey Hall foyer, and will be forwarded to NORWESCAP for distribution.



Also there will be a Social Ministry meeting on Aug. 2nd, at 1:00 pm to learn how to crochet the sleeping mats for the homeless. Anyone may attend but will need to bring a "P" hook if they are planning to crochet. Any questions, contact Sharon Risko at thevillagegirl@yahoo.com.

Your Cell Phone vs. Your Bible

What if we carried it around in our pockets?
What if we flipped through it a few times a day?
What if we turned back to get it if we forgot it?
What if we used it to get messages for the text?
What if we believed we couldn't live without it?
What if we gave it to our kids as gifts?
What if we used it when we traveled?
What if we used it in case of emergency?
This is something to make you go hmm
Where is MY Bible?

Oh, and one more thing. Unlike our cell phone, we don't have to worry about our Bible being disconnected - Jesus already paid the bill.

AND NO DROPPED CALLS!!

Submitted by Liz Kolba

Calling All Youth Who Have Completed 7th-11th Grade!

Youth Event: Picnic, Pool Party & Planning
Sunday, August 13th, , 2-4 pm
At the home of Mr. & Mrs. Dominic Esposito

Hear ye! Hear Ye! We have been talking about talking about going to the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston, Texas, June 27th-July 1st, 2018 for about a year. Now it is time to move from talking about talking about it to ACTUALLY talking about GOING to the Gathering. We are partnering with the Youth of Grace Lutheran Church to plan on attending. At this YOUTH KICKOFF event we will:

- † Hear about, watch a video about, and get questions answered about the 2018 ELCA Youth Gathering.
- † Start making DEFINITE plans for attending.
- † Receive REGISTRATION PACKETS and information.
- † Have fun with yard games
- † Eat
- † Swim
- † Get to know one another
- † Begin planning other youth activities for the 2017-18 year.



If you have completed 7th through 11th grade, YOU ARE ELIGIBLE to participate in the Gathering. We will fly to Houston, Texas, stay in a hotel, do a service project, attend mass gatherings (30,000+ people in the NRG Stadium), and participate in workshops, fun games, as well as experience one of the most multi-cultural cities in the country AND SO MUCH MORE. But WE NEED TO GET STARTED and start rocking. So, plan on coming to the Kick-off event. Youth currently in 8th-12th grades and their parents are encouraged to come to this Kick-off also. Please contact Pr. or Karen Kelly (kbak58@comcast.net) or call the church office for more information.

On the Lighter Side

Every ten years the monks in a particular monastery are allowed to break their vow of silence to speak two words. Ten years go by, and it is one monk's first chance. He thinks long and hard before telling the abbot, "Food bad."

Ten years later it's his turn to speak again. This time he says, "Bed hard."

Another decade passes, and once more the big day arrives. The monk gives the abbot a long stare and says, "I quit."

"Well, I'm not surprised," the abbot says. "You've been complaining ever since you got here."

Movie & Conversation

With the success of our two book discussions, Pr. & Deacon Kelly have decided to expand our artistic repertoire into the cinematic arts. So, on Monday, August 7th, at 7:00 pm, the curtain will go up on the acclaimed film, *Chocolat*. The film stars Johnny Depp, Juliette Binoche, Dame Judi Dench and Alfred Molina. This wonderful British romantic comedy has deep theological and moral implications. It was nominated for 5 Academy Awards (Best Picture, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress (Dench won), Best Screenplay, and Best Original Music). *Chocolat* won 4 Golden Globes and 8 British Academy of Film and Television Arts awards. Snacks will be provided for the show!

Then, the following week on Monday, August 14th, we will reconvene to discuss the theological, moral, and relational issues highlighted in the film. *Chocolat* is rated PG-13, so it would be better if younger children were left with a sitter. Both the film and the discussion will be open to members of St. James and Grace, and anyone they invite! This would be a wonderful non-threatening way to engage someone you know with the church. The location for the showing of the film and the discussion will be revealed later. Please sign up in the narthex of either church!

Worship Leaders Schedule August & September

	Day/Date	Special	Greeters	Lector	Liturgist	Ushers
Aug.	Sun. 6 th		Dave & Charlotte Morris	Steve Stocker	Ralph Avard	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
	Sun. 13 th		Lois Steible Carol Steible	Bob Babcock	Karen Kelly	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
	Sun. 20 th		Janet Bray	Marlie Raspe	Steve Stocker	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
	Sun. 27 th		George & Chris Scherer	Karoline Avard	Jamie McLain	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
Sept.	Sun. 3 rd	Labor Day Weekend	Dave & Charlotte Morris	Ralph Avard	Dan Gulick	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
	Sun. 10 th		Lois Steible Carol Steible	Karen Kelly	Karen Kelly	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
	Sun. 17 th		Janet Bray	Jamie McClain	Polly Sue Newbold	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble
	Sun. 24 th		George & Chris Scherer	Polly Sue Newbold	Steve Stocker	Harvey Walters Ron Knoble

Straw Church Tour of Eckel Museum, July 9th

Obviously the people who came on this tour had an enjoyable Sunday afternoon. Thanks to Dave and Charlotte for arranging it and to Don Eckel for taking the time to make it both enjoyable and enlightening.



I'll take it if you get me a good lease rate.



Will Charlotte let me have a convertible?



A World War II Computer - REALLY!



Sure don't make 'em like they used to!