

St. John's Lutheran Church
NEWSLETTER

Volume 117, Issue 5

MAY, 2018

“BEING FRUITFUL”

“I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” – John 15:5

I think we can safely say that winter is finally gone and spring has sprung. After waiting for nearly 16 weeks in the new calendar year, many of us are now able to get outside and enjoy the warmer weather. For some of you, there is the opportunity to do some gardening. The time has arrived to joyfully “dig up the dirt” and begin planting shrubs and flowers. Perhaps even an herb or vegetable garden.

God’s Word is full of imagery describing the relationship of Jesus Christ and all who are baptized into Him. There are the pictures of Jesus and His Bride, the Church. There are the pictures of Jesus as the head and we as His Body. There are the pictures of Jesus, the Shepherd of the sheep. And in John, chapter 15, our Savior goes into great detail portraying Himself as the vine and we who are united to Him in faith as the branches.

Our Savior calls each of us branches. This is not meant to be an insulting image. Rather, it gives us a sense of “connectedness,” a unity that now exists when we are living our lives as a part of Christ rather than apart from Him. If we as branches are connected to the true Vine, that means that we have the forgiveness of sins, new life and eternal salvation. When we are connected to Christ by faith, He provides us with the proper nutrition by His Word and Sacraments. As a result, we produce God-pleasing spiritual fruit. When we are connected we grow. When we are connected we are in Christ.

We fertilize our gardens and grass to make them grow and flourish each season. We know that if we are neglectful of proper fertilization, it can cause our lawns, gardens, and shrubs to dry up, go limp, lose color, and eventually wither and die.

As branches, we must be fertilized” too. God provides the fertilizer we need through His inspired Word and the blessed Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. We need the nourishment God provides in frequent attendance at worship and regular receiving of Holy Communion. As your pastor, I fear for those believers who intentionally separate themselves from the means of God’s abundant grace. We are to pray for them and reach out to them.

As fertilized branches in Christ, we are “in Christ,” meaning that we are branches as He is the Vine. This happens through our Baptism into Christ. In Baptism, God by His amazing grace washes away all of our sins. There we are crucified with Christ and rise again with Him to newness of life. Beautiful vines of the wine country produce the “fruit of the vine.” Through this fruit of the vine we receive the forgiveness of sins and strengthening of our faith in, with, and under the bread and wine of Holy Communion.

We then are equipped to produce spiritual fruit. By God’s amazing grace we produce good, sweet fruit that others, by our Christian witness, would want for themselves. Galatians 5:22-23 lists for us the fruit that is produced. The apostle Paul says “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-

control; against such things there is no law.”

When growing as branches, we have the awesome power of Christ’s resurrection victory pulsating through our veins. Just as plants thrive on chlorophyll, we thrive on the resurrection victory and power of Christ. When connected to Jesus Christ we are like the flowers and shrubs we plant—flourishing, vibrant, full of life, receiving the nutrients needed for life.

A Fruitful Servant of Christ,
Pastor Riley

A PRAYER AFTER HOLY COMMUNION

Merciful Redeemer, You have fulfilled Your promise, “come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28). At Your table, I have received nourishment for my soul, the water of life in my weariness. By giving me, with the bread and the cup, Your Body and Your Blood, You have again said to me: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you: I have called you by name, you are Mine” (Isaiah 43:1). You have wiped out all my sins and have put on me the garments of Your righteousness. Make me truly grateful for Your abundant love. Let the Sacrament be in me a power overcoming unbelief and doubt, conquering temptations and evil desires, and producing good works and humble service. Having been a guest at Your Table, help me to share the Bread of Life with my neighbors, so that they may share my joy and happiness. To You and the Father and the Holy Spirit be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Pastor Riley

WE WELCOME HIGHER THINGS TO ST. JOHN'S ON MAY 4th & 5th!

It is with great excitement that we announce that St. John's will be hosting the New England District Higher Things Conference this month! Higher Things is a national mission group of the LCMS designed to assist parents, pastors, and congregations in cultivating a distinctly Lutheran identity among their youth and young adults. The conference will be held this Friday, May 4th thru Saturday, May 5th.

The theme of this year's conference will be "Why do bad things happen to good people?" At last year's conference Higher Things welcomed 80 youth from around the New England LCMS district. At the conference, youth will spend two days immersed in the Gospel. They'll hear about Jesus, and what He's done for them. They'll do this by participating in the many worship services in which we join our voices with those of the historic Christian church through liturgy and hymns, and hear the Gospel preached in its purity. Youth will learn, in much greater depth, about our faith, not just what we believe, but why we believe it and why it's important. All this will equip them to talk about their faith to others. And they'll do plenty of that as they get to know other Lutheran youth just like them throughout the worship and catechesis sessions, especially during the free time activities each evening.

Higher Things invites St. John's members to participate in the various worship services held during the conference to join our voices with the LCMS youth as we sing praises to our triune God!

Friday Evening Prayer Service - 8:00 p.m.

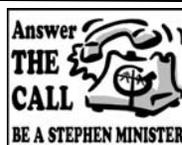
Saturday Morning Matins Service - 8:45 a.m.

Saturday Vespers Service - 3:30 p.m.



WORSHIP will take place at **St. John's Cemetery** at 8:00 a.m. on **Monday, May 28. Those who died in service to our country will be remembered as will those who died during the past year. Everyone is welcome. There are offering envelopes at the church, or mark an envelope with St. John's Cemetery Association.**

Stephen Ministry Minute:



Jesus works in and through all Christians to provide care for his people. Certainly, the Pastor is an important caregiver, and he will remain so. In addition, however, God is calling people in our congregation to be Stephen Ministers to share in St. John's caregiving ministry.

Please continue to pray for all aspects of this ministry. If you have any questions, please speak to Paul or Patti Brose at 562-6599, Dan Provost at 977-1525 or Pastor Riley today.



TAKE ME OUT to the BALL GAME

St. John's Lutheran Church Men's group has organized a trip to see the Boston Red Sox vs. the World Series Champion Houston Astros on Saturday, September 8th at 4:00 p.m. The bus will leave the church parking lot at 11:45 a.m. The cost is \$119 per person. If you are interested, contact Gary Wolfe (568-0325). Payment must be given at the time of reservation. Seats fill up fast. First come, first served basis.

Thank you to everyone in the congregation whose hard work and talents made the Easter Season here at St. John's wonderful.



Special thanks to Jeff Windoloski, who spent hours of practicing, planning and coordinating music for the services, and working with the choirs. Also thank you Linda Slozak and the hand chime choir, senior choir, and soloist for their gifts of sharing the beautiful music for the Savior's Resurrection.

Thank you to all who came and helped Spring Clean inside and outside of the church. Special thanks to Biggs Jakobowski for cleaning the windows in the Sanctuary and to Doris Love for cleaning the choir loft.



Sunday June 10 8:30 a.m. Community Breakfast

Save the date for celebrating mothers and fathers. This breakfast is a no-charge breakfast to honor the special place they have had in our lives. All are invited to the special event. Please invite your friends and family. Tickets will be issued to keep a head count for the event. Questions please call Gary Wolfe at 568-0325.

The following have signed up for flowers for the months of May and June:



May 6 - Riley
May 13 - Fogg/Sienkiewicz
May 20 - Confirmation
May 27 - Ferst
June 3 - Simmons
June 10 - McClure
June 17 - Johnson
June 24 - Caba

If you would like to sign up in the 2018 FLOWER BOOK located on the round table in the church. Cost is \$21.00 per vase. We can do up to three bouquets a week.



CONGREGATIONAL MEETING REMINDER !!!

On June 3, after the morning worship, the next congregational meeting will be held. All members of the congregation are encouraged to attend.

Bill Schneeloch
Congregational President

From the Elders:

The elder on duty each month assigns the lectors for that month. They are working to provide Jane with the list of readers for the month, one month in advance. If you are interested in being a lector, please see Bill Schneeloch who is assigned for June and Paul Brose is assigned for July. Gary Wolfe is the Elder for May.



Volunteers are needed to help host coffee hours on Sunday Mornings following the worship service. The coffee, juice and half & half are provided. All the host needs to do is provide baked goods or snacks, serve after the worship service, and clean up. There is sign up sheet in the foyer. This time after church allows for wonderful fellowship among our members. If you have any questions, please speak to Linda or Erika Slozak.

St. John's Cemetery Association

The Cemetery Association Meeting will be held on Saturday, May 12 at 6:00 p.m. in the church lounge. Please remove any winter decorations by Mother's Day. Burial plots are still available if you wish to purchase. If you have any questions, please contact Rudy Musterait (562-0653) or Henry Monczko (568-0831).

Thank you to all who made our Annual German Supper such a success! Special thanks to Mark Baldyga, head chef and supervisor, Sally for all of their hard work. Set-up crew, kitchen staff, waitresses, bake sale and cleanup crews did a wonderful job!



The next WINGS meeting will be Saturday, May 5 at noon. A luncheon will be served. Please bring any suggestions for 2018-2019 Mission Projects. Everyone is invited. If you have any questions, please contact Linda Slozak.

WESTFIELD COMMUNITY TABLE:

One of St. John's ministries is to provide a meal to the Westfield area needy at the Community Table every fourth Friday of the month which will be May 25. If your gifts are to help the needy and can spare a couple of hours each month, we are compiling a list of helpers that we will call to help as needed. The time allotment is for cooking 2:00 to 4:00 p.m. and serving from 5:00 to 6:00 p.m. **We are in need of SERVERS- only one hour of your time is needed.** Please see Sally Sienkiewicz (preparation) or Doris Love (serving) if you would be part of this ministry.

We Need Your HELP!

Volunteers are needed to care for the altar for the months of June through October and December. Men, women and teens are encouraged to help. If you cannot do a full month, two weeks will be fine. This activity doesn't take a lot of time and is very easy to do. Training will be provided if needed. Contact Jane McClure janemsm88@gmail.com or (413) 562-0492 or if you have any questions.



Orphan Grain Train New England Branch

Our next quarterly meeting is on Saturday, May 12. This will be at Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Terryville, CT at 10 a.m. In addition to our regular business meeting, we will be planning our annual cook-out and open house being held on August 11 at Holy Trinity.

Our meetings are open and welcome to all. Please contact Bill Schneeloch if you would like to carpool. He will leaving St John's parking lot at 8:30 a.m. If you would like to financially support Orphan Grain Train, donations can be mailed to: Orphan Grain Train – New England
c/o LCMS – NED
400 Wilbraham Road
Springfield, MA 01109-2723
Attn: Branch Manager: Bill Schneeloch

Please keep OGT in your prayers.



Broadcasts can be heard each Sunday at 7:30 a.m. on WHYN (560 AM). The cost for this ministry is now \$125 per week. If you are interested in sponsoring a broadcast (or a part of a broadcast) in memory of or in honor of anyone please call the church or sign up on the sheet outside the office door. Donations of any amount are welcome. Additionally, we have posted previous weeks' broadcasts on our website along with the associated bulletin. Just log onto <http://stjohnswestfield.org>; which links to the broadcasts and the weekly bulletins on the main page. If anyone would like a CD copy of any radio broadcast, please contact Bill Schneeloch 860-604-5264 or e-mail at radio@stjohnswestfield.org with any questions.

Thanks to all who support this Ministry through prayers and financially!

Making Contacts for Jesus

Do your neighbors and co-workers know you are Christian? How about the person who sells you your coffee or the person who delivers your mail? Are you attempting to develop a relationship with these people so you can share the Good News of the Gospel with them? We can give no greater service to Jesus than to be part of rescuing lost souls by sharing the life-saving Gospel. Jesus commissions us to *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit”* (Matthew 28:19). God wants *“all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”* (1 Timothy 2:4). We are to be Jesus’ hands, feet, and mouth. Jesus tells us *“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few.*

Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Luke 10:2). We are the laborers whom Jesus is seeking.

God’s plan for His people has always been that we take responsibility for sharing the Good News. Peter wrote, *“Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you”* (1 Peter 3:15). God blesses us with minds to learn and mouths to speak. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God will give us the words and the courage to use them. Along with most people, we are eager to talk about the weather, sports, economy, or politics, but, as Christians, we have been given the treasure of the Gospel message—something vastly more important to talk about. Our attitude should be

like that of Peter and John, who, when commanded to stop speaking of Christ, said, *“We cannot but speak of what we have seen and heard”* (Acts 4:20).

For many, sharing the Gospel is uncomfortable, but do people need Jesus more than we need to be comfortable. God has placed us among many people who do not know Jesus. With God’s help, we can become very intentional with our witnessing. He can open our eyes to opportunities and give us the words to speak. We may want to consider developing a list of people who do not have a relationship with Jesus. The people could be in your inner circle of family and friends as well as in your outer circle of relationships. We can be empowered to witness because the Holy Spirit will guide and direct us.

