

ST. JOHN'S WEST BEND

April 25, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Hello, my name is Rich Buss and I serve as President of St. John's Leadership Board. I am also one of St. John's Unified Leaders, which is made up of the St. John's Leadership Board, Spiritual Health Ministry Team, Foundation Board & Management Team. Amid this coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Unified Leaders of St. John's want to provide a congregational update on the activities over the last month. The last update was during worship services on March 15th - the last time we physically gathered to worship as a congregation. But we are so blessed that we can still gather to worship on-line via St. John's YouTube services. God is blessing us by His Word in new and powerful ways!

There has been a lot of praying, conversation, and planning by your leaders and staff over the last month as we seek to follow the Lord and bring His love to you and to our community. We will continue to be in dialogue together... making plans bathed in prayer, trusting in the Lord's leadership, His presence, and His promises.

We continue to Connect, Care and Share in Christ but in very different ways. This has created some challenges, but it has also created some new opportunities for all of us. All St. John's ministries have been adjusted to comply with the state and local requirements to lessen the spread of the COVID-19 virus. Here are some important updates that involve all of us as the Body of Christ:

1. We would like to thank and encourage all the people who have given us the ability to stay connected as the Body of Christ and refreshed by His Word. A huge thank you to the Lord for St. John's worship team and leaders, musicians, pastors, lay readers, videographers, mailing teams... and so many others. It has been a labor of love and done so well. All who see, hear, and read God's Word are being blessed, strengthened, forgiven, and sent in the Good News of Jesus!
2. Virtually all of St. John's ministries have been modified to comply with social distancing protocol. Many of the events have been cancelled until further notice but many operational ministries/meetings continue to progress using alternative on-line methods that allow us to remain connected and make key decisions.
3. Classes at St. John's School continue on-line via Remote Learning. This has been a big adjustment for everyone, but we are most impressed with our staff's ability to make this work and thankful for their continued dedication. We also are impressed with the partnership and love of parents who have embraced this alternative solution. We are truly blessed together in the work of the School!
4. St. John's Early Childhood Center has joined our School in offering on-line instruction and resources for 3 and 4-year-old children, but the building remains closed for normal on-site day-care services. We hope to re-open this ministry as soon as we can.

stjohns@stjohnswestbend.org † www.stjohnswestbend.org † 809 S. Sixth Avenue, West Bend, WI 53095-4613 † 262-334-4901

5. Across all St. John's ministries there have been some staff placed on furlough since March 18th. God has given our congregation a dedicated and gifted team of people to serve us, and this furlough has created a financial hardship for many of them. It is important to know that up until now, unemployment benefits are not available to church workers. To help care for our staff in all the uncertainties of this pandemic, St. John's put in place a *Compensation Continuation Plan* that provided 50% of compensation for any staff furloughed until we could figure out next steps as a congregation.
6. Most of you are familiar with the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) that our President signed into law to help all those affected by COVID 19 pandemic. St. John's has applied for the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), as part of the CARES Act, and has received a low-interest loan from the Small Business Association (SBA) in the amount of \$420,750 to help cover payroll, benefits, utilities and mortgage costs over the next 8 weeks. This is a real blessing as we hope to re-start our various ministries and provide the resources needed to make staff whole for lost income over the past month. Our St. John's West Bend Foundation is also engaged to support the work of the church and its staff beyond the next 8-weeks as needed and as appropriate. Praise God for all He provides!
7. Through March, St. John's is holding steady according to budget except for lost revenue from the Early Childhood Center. Overall, we are slightly ahead of budget in offerings. God's people have been generous to offset some of our ministry shortfalls in this pandemic. This is a good time to remind everyone to be generous and support the work of Christ's Church and the many great ministries and staff He uses to do His work. As you continue to support the Lord's work - you can give through the St. John's App or by mailing checks/offering envelopes. Thank you for your support... and thank you Lord!
8. The Congregational Meeting scheduled for May 3, 2020 is cancelled due to Governor Evers extending the Safer at Home order to May 26, 2020. A future date for the Congregation Meeting will be provided as things evolve.

As Jesus tells us in John 16:33, "I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world." Jesus will lead us through this challenging time. These challenges are a great reminder for all of us to trust in Him. As people of God, we trust in the Lord and call upon Him to increase our faith and we ask that the Holy Spirit give us confidence to live our faith out in powerful, loving ways in the days ahead.

So, let us be in prayer - for those on the frontlines working on our behalf. We pray for our government officials, healthcare workers, church leaders, staff, and all the people working with us and for us in this time of uncertainty. God's promises are true! We ask for God's mercy and His strength in the days ahead.

Thank you and Peace to you in the name of Jesus!

The Unified Leaders of St. John's

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