ST. JOHN'S UMC EPISTLE

September/October 2021

Pastor: Rev. Chuck Cole

Editor: Pam Huggins

Dear St. John's Family,

I think it's fair to say we are all disappointed that our ride onthe COVID Pandemic Roller Coaster is not over! I even got a few new masks. Have somehow lost a couple and it looks like we'll be needing them. I continue to be grateful for how effective the vaccines are in lessening the effects even with these break-through infections. We need to all pray for the approval of vaccines for younger children.

More disturbing to me these days is the extent to which the social climate of our country has become downright nasty! It seems everyone is mad about or at something or someone. As they say down on the farm, "Folks are loaded for bear and itchin' for a fight!"

I find myself thinking about some of the classic songs back my not-so-good-old days. I ask the question Marvin Gaye asked in his 1971 hit, "What's Going on?" Are we losing our collective minds? Or are we losing something much more important.... God's command that we love one another? In 1969, one of my favorite songs was recorded by Jackie DeShannon, "Put a Little Love in Your Heart." The refrain ends with, "... and the world will be a better place!" AMEN!

A revival of loving kindness may well be the only antidote for the troublesome times in which we live today. As our visiting preacher said last week, God asks us to be thankful for all things, all of the time. It's a tall order when so many awful things are happening here and around the globe. But, his message reminds us that, even in the midst of great tragedy, injustice, and loss, we can and should be grateful for what those things have to teach us about the abundant grace and mercy and comfort we have a loving God. Picking fights with our neighbors is a lose-lose situation. Accepting our differences in respect and humilityis a clear way to love one another. Finally, we can remember the urgent call in the hymn, "Let there be peace on earth, and let it begin with me!"

May the fellowship and inspiration of our church family lead the way.

Pam

Our help — past, present and future

This month, America marks the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, which ended almost 3,000 lives and changed life forever for millions more. The nation was shaken to its very roots, with violence jolting out of us any assumption that "it can't happen here." September 11 banished any lingering notion that being on the side of "liberty and justice for all" served as insulation against mass tragedy. We now had more to fear than fear itself.

Psalm 46 reminds us that "though the earth should change" (v. 2) — as it did on 9/11 —God remains "our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (v. 3). We are never alone or without hope, even on life-altering days.

How have God's presence and power sustained you through life's changes? How might sharing your story help someone else when their world or faith gets shaken?

—adapted from *The Wired Word*

From the Pastor

Brothers and Sisters of St. John's,

In the month of September we are blessed to welcome the season of Fall. The Fall for many of us is a time of increasing activity. It is often a time of re-establishing rhythms in school, work, church and other areas of life. As such, it is also an opportunity to take up new opportunities. In the church this means new ways of drawing near the Lord through prayer, learning, and serving.

Whatever your fall may look like, whatever opportunities it possesses, it is my prayer that we choose to place Christ and his love in the center of what we do. To help with this I will be praying for you and ask you to pray for each other and the whole church the following prayer first offered by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 3

14 For this reason I kneel before the Father, **15** from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. **16** I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, **17** so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, **18** may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, **19** and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

20 Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, **21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

As we seek the Lord, I believe he will answer our prayer providing us with a deeper understanding of his love. Let us this fall allow ourselves to trust the Lord to do more than we can ask or imagine in and through us and help us respond to new opportunities he provides here at St. John's and in the community that surrounds us. I look forward to seeing how he will use the new things in our lives and here at St. John's to deepen our love for him and to help us be the church the Lord calls us to that helps each other and our neighbors to know God's love.

In the Love of Christ,

Rev. Chuck Cole

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A prayer about slowing down

God beyond time … teach us to pause in this moment, to tuck ourselves into the curve of your slow arm, that we may know the miracle of now, the gift of this moment: you beside and beyond us, welcoming us outside of all we measure, and standing with us in it. May we see the goodness of our still hours and days, sunrises, sunsets, and the darkness where our rest is found.

—Micha Boyett in *A Rhythm of Prayer* (edited by Sarah Bessey)

St. John's
Preschool
News

The preschool has so many exciting
developments and opportunities to celebrate, for which we are very thankful.

We are about to embark on our 34th year in operation and hope to continue to live out the St. John's Preschool legacy well into the future. Again, thank you to St. John's United Methodist Church for sponsoring our beautiful preschool and we especially ask for your renewed prayers as we start another school year.

We are so looking forward to welcoming back students to the preschool. Although this fall will still look different than years past, we will continue our mission and stand in our belief that young children want to learn. They need an atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Our program will provide an environment where children learn through direct and indirect experiences. This type of program is vital to the growth and development of young children during their formative years.

On Thursday September 4th the preschool will host Open House from 4:00 to 6:00 pm. We will have scheduled times for parents, caregivers & students to visit their new classrooms.

Our theme for this fall is: "God's World in Autumn". We will begin by welcoming students to school & making new friends. Some areas of study this fall are: colors, apples and the four stages of the life of a monarch butterfly. Ms. Welch will be bringing in caterpillars from her farm so our little learners can witness the transformation to butterfly. We will learn how pumpkins grow, make pumpkin arts & crafts & carve a jack-o-lantern.

Below are a few important dates for our September & October calendars.

September

4	Open House (4:00 pm to 6:00 pm)
	All Registration Forms are Due
7	Class begins T/Th 2, 3. & 4 Year Olds

Jessica Welch, Pre-School Director

Christian History Made Easy

Have you ever wondered what happened between the book of Acts and know? How did we as Christians go from being a group of a few thousand people in Jerusalem on Pentecost to over 2.1 billion people spread around the world?

To help answer these and many other question this fall we will be offering a 12 session DVD Study *Christian History Made Easy*. by Dr. Timothy Paul Jones. Dr. Jones will take us through the most important events in Christian history from the time of the apostles to today. He will bring to life the fascinating people and events that shaped our world. This isn't dry names and dates. It's full of dramatic stories told with a touch of humor. The series also ties in spiritual lessons believers can glean by looking at the past, and shows how God was still working in his church despite all the ups and downs.

If you join us you will learn: The fascinating stories of ordinary people God used in extraordinary ways, like St. Patrick, Martin Luther, Francis of Assissi, and Augustine; The power struggles of emperors like Charlemagne and Constantine; How we got the Bible that we read today thanks to William Tyndale and others; The kings and queens, monks and reformers of the Middle Ages and the Reformation; Where church doctrines and practices originated; How the Roman Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches came to be; Reason and Revival: How modernity and the scientific revolution affected Christianity and How Christianity spread around the world.

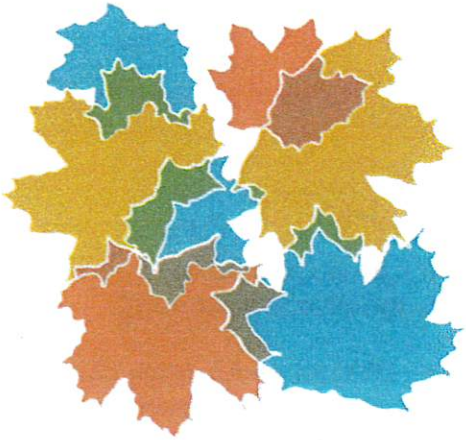
Please come out to St. John's Tuesday Night September 28th at 7:00 pm for an interest meeting. At this gathering we will discuss the schedule and answer any -questions. If you know you are coming ahead of time please let the church office or Pastor Cole know (804-387-2029/Chuckcole@vaumc.org). If you cannot make this meeting but have an interest in participating in this study please contact Pastor Chuck at 804-387-2029/Chuckcole@vaumc.org. All are welcome please invite others you think might be interested.

The Good Habit

What are you reading? Do you recommend it? What have you read that lights a fire for truth inside you? Reading is a powerful way to shape us as social and spiritual beings, and we want to create a new space to explore the way books can and are shaping us.

We want you to be a part of it! We will meet on a monthly basis to discuss what we are reading—all genres and formats are fair game. We will choose a theme for each month to provide a focal point for interaction. This theme can help us choose books or just keep us mindful of how the books we read form our thinking around these themes. Possible themes could include gratitude, beauty, or redemption. Along with good discussion , we hope that participants will help each other identify powerful and meaningful books for future reading, and that our discussion will help each individual grow as readers. All interested persons are welcome and encouraged to attend. No commitment required.

The initial meeting of the society will be October 5th at 7:00. As a way to get to know each other, please be ready to share three books or publications you have read that you enjoyed—3 books is a small number to represent a lifetime of reading, and you may choose any parameters that help you narrow it down— one book you really disliked, and what you are currently reading. This initial meeting is to gauge interest, consider scheduling, and choose themes. Please RSVP for the first meeting by contacting the church office or Pastor Cole at Chuckcole@vaumc.org or 804-387-2029.



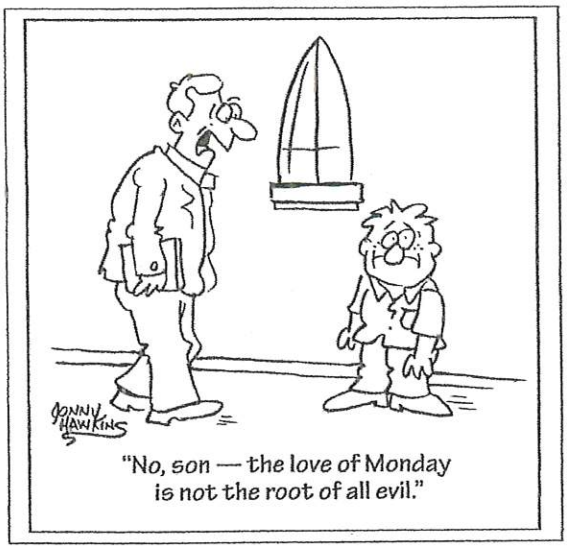
Learn from leaves

As you're enjoying the fall colors and sipping apple cider, ponder this saying: "Autumn shows us how beautiful it is to let things go."

When leaves stop producing chlorophyll, they turn vibrant shades of yellow, orange and red. This yearly spectacle makes way for the leaves to let go and fall. It also serves as a good reminder of things we may need to drop: clutter around the home, a desire for control, commitments that no longer bring joy, personal expectations that cause added stress, a need to always be right and so on.

Just as the Israelites had to let go of their past as slaves in Egypt and Saul-turned-Paul had to abandon his persecuting ways, we, too, can let go of what weighs us down and gets in the way of God's best for our lives. Embrace fall as a season of change and see just how beautiful it is to let things go!

—Janna Firestone



"No, son — the love of Monday is not the root of all evil."

Aw-fall!

Share some laughs – or groans – with these autumn-themed jokes:

- What did the tree say to autumn? "Leaf me alone!"
- What did one autumn leaf say to another? "I'm falling for you."
- How do you fix a broken pumpkin? With a pumpkin patch.
- Why are trees very forgiving? Because in the fall they "let it go" and in the spring they "turn over a new leaf."
- How do leaves get from place to place? With autumn-mobiles.
- What's the ratio of a pumpkin's circumference to its diameter? Pumpkin pi.

POETRY PAGE

{Editor's note: Cindy Phillips has been swamped with work and other obligations (including at church), so we'll have to wait until the next edition of the Epistle to read her wonderful History Page.
Ray Davis often shares some of Mary Oliver's poems with the Adult Sunday School Class. Mary Oliver was a favorite poet of Rev. Zig Volskis, and one of mine now, as well. The following poems come from one of her collections, *DEVOTIONS*, which I highly recommend!

Halleluiah

Everyone should be born into
this world happy
  and loving everything.
But in truth it rarely works that
way.
For myself, I have spent my life
clamoring toward it.
Halleluiah, anyway I'm not
where I started!

And have you too been trudging
like that, sometimes
  almost forgetting how
wondrous the world is
    and how miraculously kind
some people can be?
And have you too decided that
probably nothing important
  is every easy?
Not say for the first sixty years.

Halleluiah, I'm sixty now, and
even a little more,
and some days I feel I have
wings.

--Mary Oliver

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We Shake With Joy

We shake with joy, we shake with
grief.
What a time they have, these two
Housed as they are in the same
body.

--Mary Oliver

The Gift

Be still, my soul, and steadfast.
Earth and heaven both are still watching
though time is draining from the clock
and your walk, that was confident and
quick, has become slow.

So, be slow if you must, but let
The heart still play its true part.
Love still as once you loved, deeply
and without patience.

Let God and the world
know you are grateful

That the gift has been given

- Mary Oliver

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Praying

It doesn't have to be the blue iris,
it could be weeds in a vacant lot,
or a few small stones; just
pay attention, then patch

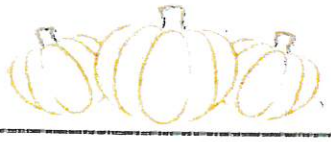
a few words together and don't try
to make them elaborate, this isn't
a contest but the doorway

into thanks, and a silence in which
another voice may speak.

- Mary Oliver

SEPTEMBER 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2 *LECTIONARY BIBLE STUDY, 10:30-11:30AM* OPEN HOUSE PRESCHOOL 4-6pm	3	4
5 *15th Sunday after Pentecost* Happy Birthday to Sarah Cole!	6 LABOR DAY (OFFICE CLOSED) Happy Birthday to Brenda Kirby!	7 Happy Birthday to Mike Hammer!	8 Happy Birthday to Daniel Cole!	9 *LECTIONARY BIBLE STUDY, 10:30-11:30AM* Happy Birthday to Bailey Hughes!	10	11
12 *16th Sunday after Pentecost*	13 PASTOR	14 COLE	15 RENEWAL	16 *LECTIONARY BIBLE STUDY, 10:30-11:30AM* LEAVE	17	18
19 *17th Sunday after Pentecost*	20 Happy Birthday to Iris Carr!	21 Happy Birthday to Gwen Hammer!	22 FALL	23 *LECTIONARY BIBLE STUDY, 10:30-11:30AM* Happy Birthday to Bob Pack and to Danielle Hammer!	24	25 Happy Birthday to Mark Jordan!
26 *18th Sunday after Pentecost* Happy Birthday to Ashley Wilcher!	27 Happy Birthday to Pat Fitzgerald and to Hattie Markham!	28 CHRISTIAN HISTORY MADE EASY, 7:00PM	29	30 *LECTIONARY BIBLE STUDY, 10:30-11:30AM* Happy Birthday to Zach Kirby!		



OCTOBER 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 *19th Sunday after Pentecost* Happy Birthday to Allen Daughtrey!	4 Happy Birthday to Chris Markham!	5 *THE GOOD HABIT, 7:00PM*	6	7 *LECTIONARY BIBLE STUDY, 10:30-11:30AM*	8 Happy Birthday to Berk Hughes!	9
10 *20th Sunday after Pentecost*	11 Columbus Day *(OFFICE CLOSED)*	12 Happy Birthday to Jim Belshee!	13	14 *LECTIONARY BIBLE STUDY, 10:30-11:30AM*	15	16
17 *21st Sunday after Pentecost*	18	19 Happy Birthday to Leah Pack!	20	21 *LECTIONARY BIBLE STUDY, 10:30-11:30AM*	22	23
24 *22nd Sunday after Pentecost*	25	26	27	28 *LECTIONARY BIBLE STUDY, 10:30-11:30AM*	29 Happy Birthday to Marion Taylor and to John Pancake!	30
31 *23rd Sunday after Pentecost* Happy Halloween						